

POLITICAL POWER OF THE OVERSEAS CHINESE
IN WEST MALAYSIA, 1965-1978

Ronald G. S. Tom

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Political Power of the Overseas Chinese
in West Malaysia, 1965-1978

by

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Captain, United States Army
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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with Chinese political power in the Federation of Malaysia since the expulsion of Singapore (with its large Chinese population) from the federation in 1965. In determining the extent of Chinese political power in Malaysia, an examination of two significant areas was essential. First, the racial conflict and violence between the Malays and non-Malays (mainly the Chinese) were major problems which shook the very foundation of the political, economic and social structures of Malaysia. Second, the results of the last three Malaysian Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly General Elections were analyzed and interpreted to gain a clearer picture of the Malaysian political scene. Finally, a projection of the future political prospects for Malaysia was offered.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Lea E. Williams, in his book The Future of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, defines an overseas Chinese as an individual of some Chinese ancestry who views residence abroad as compatible with Chinese cultural identity and less certainly with some remote Chinese political orientation. An overseas Chinese considers the expatriation from his homeland the result of his own or his forebearers' economic ambitions. He also regards himself as a member of the overseas Chinese people, which is, in turn, part of the greater Chinese nation, and is so regarded by those around him. Overseas Chinese communities exist in every country in Southeast Asia to include Malaysia, and dot many nations of the remainder of the globe. It is worth noting that the Chinese population of Hong Kong does not realistically fit any practical definition of an overseas Chinese community. Contrary to some sources, a majority of this Chinese community apparently consider themselves residents of a portion of their native Kwangtung Province which just happens to be under British control. Hong Kong's propinquity to China mitigates against it being a legitimate overseas Chinese community.

The overseas Chinese have traditionally been stereotyped as trading people, tending to be urbanized and, if not yet financially successful, ordinarily strongly attracted by the

lure of commercial profits. In this capacity, the overseas Chinese have frequently been referred to as the Jews of the Far East. Furthermore, labels such as inscrutable, energetic, hard-working, clannish, and apolitical, have habitually followed the overseas Chinese wherever they venture. Being apolitical was a deliberate choice of the overseas Chinese for a number of reasons. In the past, they have preferred to let some other element run the government (as long as it was run well) so their full efforts could be devoted to economic endeavors. Another major reason involved the overseas Chinese community's efforts to maintain a "low profile" and not draw undue attention upon themselves. Historically, high levels of attention on the overseas Chinese have caused them to be the victims of jealous and antagonistic actions on the part of the non-Chinese population. As with all generalizations, there are exceptions and the overseas Chinese in Malaysia proved to be such an anomaly. The Chinese element in Malaysia has been one of the very few, if not the only, overseas Chinese communities to vie for fair political representation or political power through the democratic process, the vote. The debut of the overseas Chinese challenge to the politically-dominant Malays occurred in the elections of 1964 with the efforts of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew and the People's Action Party (PAP) of Singapore. But the real challenge did not materialize until the 1969 elections, after the separation of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia, and the resulting Chinese successes were greeted with chaotic violence.

This thesis will examine the successes and failures of the overseas Chinese community, especially the minority Chinese opposition parties, in its attempts to gain fair political representation through the election process. This representation is a critical ingredient to the achievement of an elusive "national unity," an expressed desire of the Malay political hierarchy.

II. THE SEPARATION OF SINGAPORE FROM MALAYSIA

On 16 September 1963, after more than two years of deliberation and preparation, Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah united in constituting the Federation of Malaysia. The motivations, objectives, and expectations tied up in the merger were as diverse as the land and people of the four units involved.¹ On 24 May 1963, the Prime Minister of Singapore (Lee Kuan Yew) argued that the "political, economic and military reasons are so compelling that we would be committing national suicide if we refused to merge in Malaysia."² On that occasion, Lee Kuan Yew declared, probably correctly, that the first pre-condition for the success of Malaysia was "National unity of all the races comprising Malaysia with undivided loyalty to the elected Central Government of Malaysia."³ Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaya, maintained that "Since the independence of Malaya, we have made a success of everything; there is no reason why we can't make Malaysia a success too."⁴ Both Prime Ministers, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaya, appeared to be profoundly committed to the concept of the newly created Federation of Malaysia.

Yet, on 9 August 1965, the State of Singapore was separated from the Federation of Malaysia. R. S. Milne compared Malaya and Singapore to Siamese twins, who could be separated only with damage to the health of at least one of the

children.⁵ Yet, they were separated in a bloodless but traumatic operation.⁶ For the Tunku, the news of separation, which he announced to the Malaysian Parliament, was "the most painful and heart-breaking news I have had to break"⁷ For Lee, "it is a moment of anguish. All my life, my whole adult life, I have believed in merger and unity of the two territories. . . . It broke everything we stood for."⁸ The most striking characteristic of the partial dissolution of the two-year-old federation was the suddenness and finality of the split between the Central Government of Malaysia and the State of Singapore. Within two years, internal divisiveness between the Malay-dominated Alliance government of Prime Minister Rahman and the predominantly Chinese State of Singapore, governed by Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP), proved the decisive centrifugal force.⁹ In retrospect, the break was inevitable, given the issues and the personalities involved.¹⁰

The sources of conflict between the Central Government and the Singapore Government which culminated in the expulsion of Singapore on 9 August 1965, were numerous and quite conspicuous. In reality, the key events were primarily political and racial in nature. These included the decision of the PAP to contest several state seats at the 1964 Malaysian elections and to establish branches in the main towns of Malaya, the communal riots in Singapore in 1964, the proposal of the PAP that there should be a "Malaysian Malaysia" as opposed to a "Malay Malaysia," and the formation of a

National Solidarity Convention to support a "Malaysian Malaysia." Additional sources of friction which perpetuated the conflict, included personal differences between the two Prime Ministers and disputes over the division of tax revenue, a common market, pioneer industries, the 1965 federal budget, the closure of the Bank of China in Singapore, and the control of broadcasting and television. In the final analysis, it was the intertwining of political and communal differences and the subsequent threat of racial violence that tipped the balance toward the separation of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia.

A. POLITICAL RIVALRY

After Malaysia Day in 1963, Singapore's political environment became too restrictive for the ambitious and impatient PAP hierarchy. Lee Kuan Yew was only the de facto leader of a small Opposition in the federal parliament, tightly controlled by the massive majority of the government Alliance Party,¹¹ the multi-ethnic coalition comprised of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). In April 1964, the PAP made the decision to extend its party apparatus to the Malayan peninsula by entering the Malayan elections (primarily in the urban constituencies with substantial Chinese populations) to the federal parliament. The PAP leaders, who have often described themselves as being "calculating," welcomed the opportunity of extending their calculations over the Malaysian abacus.¹²

The decision of Singapore's People's Action Party to participate in the Malayan state and parliamentary elections of April, 1964, was probably the most crucial it was to make in the course of its dispute with the Alliance Party and the Central Government.¹³ In UMNO's hostile view, the PAP's ill-concealed objective was to make Lee Kuan Yew the first Chinese prime minister of Malaysia and add Chinese political domination to their existing stranglehold over the Malaysian economy.¹⁴ The Alliance leadership on the mainland considered the PAP venture a direct challenge to Alliance supremacy while the Malays regarded it as Chinese defiance of a political arrangement which guaranteed Malay paramountcy. In the end, the PAP, in its first major attempt to win a place for itself on the national political scene, succeeded only in embittering federal-state relations, incurring the wrath of the Malays, confirming the Tunku's distrust of Lee, and opening the political field to a deadly racial battle.¹⁵

On 1 March 1964, Dr. Toh Chin Chye, Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, announced that the PAP would compete for a small number of seats in the Malayan state and parliamentary elections in April. He then presented the argument that the PAP, which was a leading force in the formation of Malaysia, had to regard itself as a national-level organization. Dr. Toh stressed that his party had no intention of capturing the Central government, but wanted to play a wider part in building Malaysia "instead of being cornered like a rat in Singapore."¹⁶ Within five years, he said, the PAP hoped to be "a force to be reckoned with" in Malaysia.¹⁷

The PAP Election Manifesto delineated two party objectives for the Malayan election competition. The long-term objective was "to assist in the building of a united democratic and socialist Malaysia, based on the principles of social justice and non-communalism."¹⁸ The immediate objective was "to ensure that the Socialist Front (an alliance between the Parti Ra'ayat or People's Party, a rural Malay element, and the Labour Party of Malaya, an urban Chinese organization) does not benefit from the substantial protest votes against the MCA."¹⁹ An Indian official of the PAP expressed his party's objectives somewhat more succinctly:

Our long-range objective, quite frankly, is to start a social revolution in Malaysia and break down the communal walls in this country. Our short-term objective is just as clear. We want to defeat the Socialist Front and the Malayan Chinese Association, and by doing so prove to the Tunku that we are the only party that can appeal to progressive-minded Malaysians in the cities of this country.²⁰

During the 1964 campaign, four themes emerged and pervaded the PAP's pronouncements and activities. First, the PAP's token participation was deliberate in the expectation that it would generate a minimum amount of disruption to the Malay political organization. Commented Lee prophetically:

We believe that any massive intervention in the elections can be misinterpreted and will be presented to the rural Malays as an attempt to challenge Umno. This will be bad for Malaysia for it will encourage extremist Malay elements to work up feeling that with merger and Malaysia the position of the Malays has been endangered and the Chinese in the towns are making a bid for power.²¹

The election of 1964 was regarded as a prelude to the proverbial main event, the election of 1969. In Lee's words, "If it is possible to get the winds of change to blow in gently

this year so much less of an upset it will be all round in 1969."²² Although the PAP registered candidates for only 11 parliamentary and 15 assembly seats (all in urban areas), an even lesser number (9) of the parliamentary candidates actually campaigned. The inadequacy of the PAP's organizational effort was reflected in the defeat of all but one of its nine candidates.²³

Second, the PAP leaders made it clear that their party was not opposing UMNO, nor the Tunku, nor any part of the Malay leadership of the Alliance.²⁴ The PAP announced that two of its nominees for Johore constituencies would not campaign because, contrary to PAP expectations, their Alliance opponents were UMNO and not MCA members.²⁵ Throughout the campaign, Lee stressed the importance of retaining the Tunku's leadership at this crucial moment when the nation was facing Indonesian Confrontation (Indonesia aggressively pledged to "crush Malaysia" as a British-conceived, "neo-colonial" creation):

. . . the only coherent and effective leadership that can build a Malaysia separate from Indonesia is that of the Tengku and Tun Razak in Umno. . . . For Malaysia to succeed, we must help the Tengku's leadership to succeed.²⁶

Lee announced that all Malaysians were in the "same boat" and no better hands were available to pilot this vessel than the Tunku's. But, he added, the PAP can help him navigate by pointing out rocks and perils in its path.²⁷

Third, the PAP proposed certain social and economic changes in Malaysia which might help to narrow the gap between the urban and rural populations and between the "haves"

and the "have nots."²⁸ Said Lee:

If it can be shown that the people in the bigger towns in Malaya support Malaysia by supporting pro-Malaysia parties, better still, if it can be shown that they support an economic and social policy similar to that of Singapore, it will give us added strength in convincing the Umno leadership that this policy should be adopted in Malaya, particularly when these policies will benefit the rural Malays even more.²⁹

The fourth theme was the PAP's direct competition with the Malayan Chinese Association and the Socialist Front. Lee argued that while the present Malay leadership of the Tunku and Tun Razak in UMNO "is vital to the survival and success of Malaysia, the Chinese leadership in the Alliance as represented by the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) is replaceable."³⁰ It is unclear whether Lee believed or desired that his party actually would be taken into the Alliance Party in place of the MCA, but it is clear that he foresaw some subsequent cooperation between the PAP and UMNO.³¹

The PAP quickly proceeded with its plan to participate in the election once the decision was made. PAP headquarters were established in Kuala Lumpur, and gradually, new branches were opened in the areas in which PAP candidates were contesting.³² In addition to establishing a party election machine on the peninsula, PAP leaders conducted a search throughout Malaya for probable candidates to carry the PAP standard.

The reactions of the Tunku and his Alliance Party over the actuality and basis of the PAP's participation in the Malayan elections were characterized by profound distress, deep irritation and extreme anger. To the Tunku this

participation was not only contrary to an earlier pledge which the Tunku felt Lee had made, but it was also, in the Tunku's eyes, an attempt to go back on the constitutional arrangements by which Singapore was accepted into the federation: the limitation of Singapore's representation in Parliament to 15 seats.³³

This earlier pledge involved the interpretations of the scope and meaning of specific provisions of the Malaysian Federal Constitution. In addition to the arrangement of limiting Singapore to 15 of the 159 seats in the Federal Parliament, which did not specifically prohibit Singapore-based parties from attempting to enhance their representation by contesting seats in other sections of the federation, Singapore citizens could not vote or run for federal and state office in the Malayan states. Although both Singapore and Malayan leaders concurred on these constitutional provisions--designed by the Alliance Party hierarchy to insulate Malaya politically from Singapore--their interpretations of the extent and intent of these arrangements differed greatly. In the Tunku's view, Singapore politicians were to confine their activities to Singapore:

When Singapore came into this new nation of Malaysia, we had agreed under the Constitution that she should have representation in our Parliament and fit into the pattern by having her own administrative machinery, and her own elections. The first sign of Singapore's attempt to have a hand in the affairs of Malaysia was in the last elections when the PAP contested some of the constituencies. That was quite contrary to what we agreed.³⁴

Though there are indications that Lee personally promised the Tunku that the PAP would not contest the 1964 Malayan

elections, there is no evidence that any such promise was made with the agreement of the PAP leadership, nor that this moratorium would be extended beyond the 1964 elections.³⁵ Yet it is clear, from his actions and statements, that the Tunku expected and intended that the leaders of Singapore should take little or no part in the national politics and government of Malaysia.

The PAP's assault on the MCA also elicited deep resentment from the Tunku. Throughout the campaign he reiterated his determination to stick with the MCA and rebuffed PAP advances despite what he termed "our own internal party troubles."³⁶

Tan Siew Sin, President of the MCA, and Dato Syed Jaffar Albar, Secretary General of UMNO, were the central figures directing the Alliance Party's strategy in the clash against the PAP. Tan believed that the PAP's actions were a direct "challenge to the MCA as to whether it is the PAP or the MCA that should represent the Chinese in Malaysia."³⁷ The orientation of Jaffar Albar's campaign against the PAP provided a hint to the racial conflict which exploded in Singapore a few months after the Malayan elections. More ominously, he spoke of the "pathetic" plight of the Malays in Singapore under Lee's rule, saying that "Lee Kuan Yew is so contemptuous of the Malays that his Government refused to appoint any Malay to serve on statutory bodies in Singapore."³⁸

As was previously disclosed, the PAP was soundly defeated--the biggest surprise of the election. The results of

the April 25 balloting revealed that the Alliance prevailed in 89 of the 104 parliamentary seats, an unprecedented feat. In voting for state assemblies, the Alliance captured 241 seats, the PAP none.³⁹ While the MCA made the most substantial Alliance gains, the PAP managed to poll only 16.3 percent of the valid votes cast in the parliamentary constituencies. . . and 13.9 percent in the state constituencies.⁴⁰ The PAP Central Executive Committee attributed the election defeat to "the sense of national solidarity in defense of Malaysia under the threat from Indonesia. . . ."⁴¹ It appeared quite evident that the PAP operation on the peninsula was inadequately organized. In addition, it was blatantly obvious that the PAP failed to do its "homework" in selecting candidates, emphasizing the relevant issues, and communicating with the Malayan people.

From the time of its Malayan election defeat, the PAP seemed to turn its efforts more and more clearly towards opposition to the Alliance and the Central government, and to have given up the idea of joining and cooperating with the Tunku and his political entourage.⁴² The eventual conflict transcended political boundaries and spilled over into the racial scene resulting in disaster for the country as a whole.

1. The Singapore Riots

During a procession of Muslims celebrating the Prophet's birthday on 21 July 1964, communal riots exploded and continued sporadically for almost a week. This violence

resulted in 22 reported deaths and nearly 500 injuries.⁴³ It has been reported that on the eve of the riots, leaflets urging Malays to kill Chinese were distributed in Singapore, and the markings on these leaflets read, "Singapore Malay National Action Committee."⁴⁴

The PAP accused the communal politicking of Jaffar Albar, Utusan Melayu (a Malay newspaper printed in Jawi script and connected to several UMNO leaders who had sizeable share holdings), and the Singapore UMNO branch as being responsible for the violence. Lee, in a radio broadcast on the first night of the riots, said that "All the indications show that there has been organization and planning behind this outbreak to turn it into an ugly communal clash."⁴⁵ On the other hand, the three accused parties reciprocated by blaming the riots on what they stated was the "PAP's attempt to humiliate the Malay community in Singapore and to divide it."⁴⁶ The Tunku, in Washington at the time of the outbreak, claimed that he had evidence that Indonesia was behind the rioting and commented with dismay, "This is the most unhappiest moment of my life. Nothing like this has happened in my country before."⁴⁷

Both Lee and the Tunku were genuinely and justifiably perturbed by the communal riots. In a speech in Singapore a month after the outbreak, the Tunku again blamed the riots on Indonesians who, he claimed, had stirred up the legitimate grievances of the Singapore Malays.⁴⁸ Lee left the problem in the Tunku's hands and apparently tried his best

to keep from assessing blame; his own conviction as to Al-bar's and UMNO's responsibility, however, his own conviction was difficult to hide.⁴⁹

On 2 September 1964, new communal rioting erupted in Singapore, apparently fomented on this occasion by Indonesian agents. The Tunku repeated his charge that Indonesian agents discovered fertile ground in the grievances of the Malays in Singapore:

The trouble in Singapore arose because the Malays there felt themselves neglected and despised. They expected the Government to improve their lot but the State Government of Singapore made no provision for special treatment of one particular race or community. They, therefore, felt aggrieved. So it needed only a little incitement to start off trouble.⁵⁰

Not only were the Singapore riots distressing in themselves because of the destruction and loss of life they had caused, but they also made clear the potential danger involved in rousing racial sentiments through political agitation, the explosiveness of the Singapore community, and the possible disaster which could take place throughout Malaysia should racial passions be inflamed.⁵¹

2. Malaysian Solidarity Convention

In May and June of 1965, the heated dispute between the Singapore and Central governments reached the crisis stage and ultimately a climax. Beginning with the PAP's 10th Anniversary Congress in November, 1964, there had been talk of the establishment of a united opposition front composed of all pro-Malaysia opposition parties.⁵² The proposed front was envisioned by PAP leaders as an instrument through

which to fight for the principle of equality embodied in the "Malaysian Malaysia" concept and through which to promote democratic socialism and parliamentary democracy.⁵³ Lee was perhaps somewhat less idealistic in his assessment of the front when he commented:

if it is necessary to have a Malaysian Malaysia through such a group of parties making an effort to win the majority of seats in Malaysia to form the Government, well so be it. It has to be done.⁵⁴

In April, 1965, in the wake of intensified efforts by leaders of the Malayan Alliance Party to strengthen their sister organization in Singapore,⁵⁵ a Malaysian National Alliance Party was formed by merging the four separate Alliance parties of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak.⁵⁶ This merger of Alliance parties throughout Malaysia provided the impetus for the implementation of the proposed united opposition front.

On 9 May 1964, five Malaysian opposition parties assembled in Singapore and formulated the Malaysian Solidarity Convention. These five parties included the People's Action Party (PAP); the People's Progressive Party of Malaya (PPP), the champion of the cause of the Chinese schools; the United Democratic Party of Malaya (UDP); the moderate faction of the leftist Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), an essentially Chinese-based but multi-racial party whose primary objective called for the independence of Sarawak; and MACHINDA, a relatively new and small Sarawak party. These parties spanned the Malaysian political spectrum from center right to far left. Only the PAP and SUPP had proved

substantial local appeal, and the prospect of affiliation with the Malaysian Solidarity Convention caused a serious internal crisis in SUPP.⁵⁷

Although the Malaysian Solidarity Convention was predominantly the incorporation of the political ideology which Lee and his PAP had consistently expounded, the brittle unity of the new movement was apparently based on its members' mutual fear of Malay communalism. In principle the general aims of the Convention were unexceptionable: the promotion of parliamentary democracy and prevention of the identification of the nation with the interests or supremacy of any one community or race.⁵⁸ The Convention charged that the Alliance Party was a conglomerate of communal parties with communal cooperation being confined to the top leadership echelons of the individual parties. Lee called for the creation of a truly non-communal society through the complete destruction of the communal structures and the reconstruction of a non-communal party from the basement to the roof--a "Malaysian Malaysia."

The proposal and the Convention itself evoked a violent reaction from many Alliance stalwarts in Malaya who termed it an insidious plot and a device to put Lee into a position to capture the Central government.⁵⁹ Alliance leaders were particularly distressed, it appears, because the new Convention made clear the significance of one of the great unknowns in the Malaysian political scene: the possible

future political complexion and sympathies of the people of Sarawak and Sabah.⁶⁰ The continuance of Malay political supremacy was now in serious question.

In the final analysis, the foundation of the National Solidarity Convention did more to accentuate, rather than diminish, the racial aspects of the conflict. By the middle of 1965, the conflict was being ventilated increasingly in racial terms. In the Tunku's opinion, of the many problems that existed, the one that gave him the most concern was the communal issue.⁶¹

B. RACIAL CONFLICT

The conflict between Singapore and the Central Government and the eventual separation itself cannot be completely understood without considering the most volatile and most fundamental factor involved--that of race. Virtually every aspect of the Singapore-Malaya dispute became entangled in the racial embroilment, and it was in the context of this controversy that other considerations--economic, political, and ideological--assumed such critical proportions.⁶²

Since Malaysia is a multi-racial country, the potential for problems surfacing from a racially-mixed society had been recognized and scrutinized. Under the auspices of constitutional documentation, the Malays have continually been accorded special privileges especially an insured political dominance, to equalize the obvious economic paramountcy of the more ambitious and harder-working non-Malays.

Although the Malays prevailed numerically over the Chinese population on the peninsula, the latter constituted a solid 75% of the inhabitants in Singapore. Consequently, the Borneo States of Sarawak and Sabah were incorporated into the Federation of Malaysia for the express purpose of counterbalancing the Chinese population in Singapore. In the new federation of Malaysia, the Malays constituted 39.4 percent of the population; Chinese 42.3 percent; indigenous peoples, 6.7 percent; Indians and Pakistanis, 9.3 percent.⁶³

Racial distrust and dislike within Malaya had long been covered over with a veneer of harmony.⁶⁴ Although the Chinese and Malays enjoyed and became secure with their respective economic and political ascendancy, the formation of Malaysia shook the guarded security of the Malay people. The belated Malay realization that their race no longer enjoyed a numerical majority or even a plurality in the Federation of Malaysia as it did in former Malaya, resulted in a pronounced fear of a Chinese takeover. Lee Kuan Yew became the central figure accentuating this fear of the Malays. Lee himself reportedly said that he would like to be Prime Minister only if it would benefit as a whole.⁶⁵

1. "Malaysian Malaysia"

The political and communal aspects of the conflict were interwoven to a point that separation of these distinct factors had become impossible. The PAP's concept of a "Malaysian Malaysia" presented an extremely sensitive and crucial issue in the racial dispute. The PAP was determined

on creating a common Malaysian identity--non-communal or Malaysian Malaysia--among the varied nationalities of the federation. As it was described by the Malaysian Solidarity Convention, "A Malaysian Malaysia means that the nation and the state is not identified with the supremacy, well-being and the interests of any one particular community or race."⁶⁶

Alliance leaders countered that the Alliance had accepted the principle of a Malaysian Malaysia even before Malaysia itself had been formed.⁶⁷ Through these views, which were announced publicly, the differences between the Alliance Party and the PAP were not in the final objective but in the method of approach and the time-phasing involved in the attainment of the goal. Lee Kuan Yew expressed the following point of view:

We both want to get a Malaysian Malaysia, be we propose route "A", direct from many States together into one federation, from many groups together into a multi-racial party, towards a multi-racial, united Malaysia. They say 'No, let us go slowly--separate States--Singapore different from Malaya. You keep to Singapore, please don't interfere in Malaya. We will run things for you, but we will try to get to the point of a multi-racial Malaysia.'⁶⁸

Dr. Ismail Bin Dato Abdul Rahman, Malaysian Minister of Internal Security and Home Affairs, put it in this manner:

There are two ways of establishing a Malaysian Malaysia. First is the platform of the PAP--noncommunalism straightaway. The other--the method adopted by the Alliance--requires two steps. First, inter-racial harmony; second, an ultimate state of non-communalism.⁶⁹

The Tunku made the following statement on the issue:

Young men . . . want to rush things. Instead of doing what they want in a quiet and practical way, they tread on everybody's toes, knock everybody's head and bring about chaos, suspicion, misunderstanding, hatred and trouble. . . . The suggestion from these young leaders

is that you can do this (demolish the dividing wall among the races) overnight without making any attempt to put the timbers in shape. Why rush? After all, the nation will live many long years. Why not take time to make a strong nation?⁷⁰

Lee's concept of a non-communal Malaysia which would permit all racial groups to compete for political power on an equality basis, was designed to produce a predominantly Chinese government. If this societal process was allowed to proceed, Lee's dream of Chinese political supremacy would most likely have been a reality. The Tunku's gradual wearing away of communal walls would assure Malay political control for the present, and perhaps also in the long-run when the Malays reach that theoretical condition of overall readiness to compete with the Chinese from a position of equality.⁷¹

2. Malay Special Privileges

A second significant factor in the communal dispute revolved around Malay rights and privileges. These special privileges had been granted to the Malays in an attempt first, to give them a feeling of security and to compensate, particularly in the political sphere, for the ambition and energy of the Chinese; and second, to "uplift" the Malays so that they could eventually compete with the Chinese.⁷² Lee attacked Malay privileges on the grounds that they did not achieve their second objective:

While we uphold special privileges for Malays in the constitution, we believe that the crux of the problem is how to raise the living standards of the rural people, who are mainly Malays. Their standards of living are not advanced by special rights for a small number of special Malays Special privileges will only help a small group of Malay bourgeoisie to become capitalists, who will later exploit the poorer section of the people of all races.⁷³

In the words of Singapore Minister for Social Affairs Inche Othman Wok: "The special Malay rights should be an incentive to the Malays to work doubly hard to improve their living and not as an excuse for them to hide behind."⁷⁴ Lee further declared that, in accordance with the Constitution, the privileges granted to the Malays were not political in nature but economically and socially oriented. Thus, he maintained, the Malays had no special right to rule Malaysia.⁷⁵

The Alliance Party supported Malay privileges on the grounds that they did achieve their first objective (to give the Malays security and to compensate for the dynamism of the other communities), and that they were absolutely necessary in order to insure the Malays against domination by the other communities.⁷⁶ The Tunku argued:

Our aim to establish a system of parity, not only politically but economically, would leave no one out or unable to compete in the forward march of the new Malaysia. . . . Ultimately the time will come when it will be possible by legislative action to amend the Constitution because this special position will no longer be needed. . . . It would be foolish, however, to hasten the day of revision of these constitutional rights prematurely.⁷⁷

Commenting that the Malays constituted only one percent of the business-force and only 15 percent of the university students, the Tunku warned:

If these rights are taken away what hope is there for the Malays to survive in their own country? . . . If the Malays are not given protection you will find that they will join the ranks of extremists and in the course of time you will find Malaysia joining Indonesia.⁷⁸

3. Protagonists

Two protagonists, the Malay "ultras" and the Malay newspaper Utusan Melayu, played significant roles in the communal dispute. As in most nations of the world, the Federation of Malaya and its successor, Malaysia, had its share of vehement nationalists (Malay) who occupied key government and political party positions. These ardent Malay nationalists included the UMNO Secretary-General Jaffar Albar, Language and Literature Agency Director Syed Nasir, and Minister of Information and Broadcasting Inche Senu who also headed the UMNO Youth Organization. It was Lee Kuan Yew who gave these Malay "ultra-nationalists" their label,⁷⁹ and, by doing so, may have provided them the catalyst to consolidate their position and achieve nationwide support.

The Tunku attempted to exert some control over the extremists and their antagonistic comments. When his moderating efforts failed, the Tunku refused to take any drastic action against them. Consequently, the power of the Malay "ultras" in party and government affairs increased significantly during the last two months of the conflict especially with the absence of the Tunku's moderating influence. Indeed, the theory has been advanced that at the time of the break, the Tunku was losing his control of the extremists and perhaps also of his party.⁸⁰ In an undated letter to Dr. Toh, in a last-minute effort to convince the Singapore Deputy Prime Minister of the necessity of the split, the Tunku wrote:

If I were strong enough and able to exercise complete control of the situation I might perhaps have delayed action, but I am not, and so while I am able to counsel tolerance and patience I think the amicable settlement of our differences in this way is the only possible way out.⁸¹

The Tunku subsequently tried to explain that the phrase "if I were strong enough" had no reference to his ability to control his party or the country.⁸² Even if one believed that the Tunku was in control of the extremists, one could not deny the increasing frequency in which the latter began speaking on behalf of the Malay people. Apparently acting on their own initiative, the extremists persuasively played upon the Malays' fear that their status in the country was being seriously threatened, and were quite successful in doing so.

Utusan Melayu, a Malay newspaper printed in Jawi script, also participated and succeeded in accentuating the communal dispute. The paper printed editorials designed to incite communal differences and presented the news with a definite Malay-nationalist slant. Utusan Melayu reportedly was controlled by certain UMNO leaders, including the Mentri Besar of Trengganu who was the Chairman of the paper's Board of Directors.⁸³

C. SEPARATION

While the Tunku was attending a conference in London (June 1965), the war of words which were now expressed almost exclusively in racial terms, continued to such a degree that drastic action was imminent. In addition, the dispute had spilled over into the international arena as the Central

Government became the target of some critical press editorials in Britain. The Tunku professed to be puzzled and hurt by all the trouble in Malaysia:

Why do we want to say all these things? We are a happy people. . . . I wanted to be an elder statesman and help resolve issues worrying one party or another . . . if there is still something worrying Mr. Lee, I will be glad to look into it and see how best we can settle things.⁸⁴

Before he could look into anything, the Tunku entered the London Clinic (25 June) suffering from a painful attack of shingles. While he was in the clinic, he apparently reversed his views. He later disclosed that while in the hospital (presumably in a depressed state of mind) he got down to calculating the pros and cons of keeping Singapore in Malaysia.⁸⁵ The Tunku's initial decision on separation was apparently made on 29 June 1965.⁸⁶

Although the Tunku's 29 June decision on separation was made, it was by no means irreversible. Referring to the decision, Felix Abisheganadan, a veteran Malaysian journalist, wrote (after an interview with the Tunku on 9 August 1965, the day of separation) that, 'If there could be no agreement with the PAP to call off the heavy politicking which he (the Tunku) feared would lead to racial bloodshed,' the Tunku had felt that Singapore had to go.⁸⁷ The Tunku instructed Tun Razak (his deputy) to proceed with the legal chores necessary before separation could be effected only on 25 July 1965.⁸⁸ Further, shortly after making his decision of 29 June, the Tunku wrote a letter to Tun Razak outlining the lines of his thinking, asking Razak to discuss separation

with the Cabinet seniors, and requesting the Deputy Prime Minister to meet with Lee Kuan Yew to try to eliminate the causes of friction.⁸⁹ At Lee's request, he and Razak met on 20 July 1965 (prior to the arrival of the Tunku's letter in Kuala Lumpur) with very negative results. It clearly indicated that there was little possibility of an end to the war of words.⁹⁰ On 29 July 1965, Tun Razak again met Lee in what was later reported to have been 'one of Tun Razak's last efforts to heal the rift between the State and Central Government.'⁹¹ Of this meeting Razak later revealed: 'I met Mr. Lee. I found it impossible. Our minds did not meet on most points.'⁹² When asked if Lee knew the consequences of what would happen if he did not see eye to eye with the Central Government, Tun Razak replied, 'Certainly he did.'⁹³ According to Lee, he was not convinced that there was no other way out than separation until his meeting with the Tunku on 7 August 1965.⁹⁴

In his "breakaway" speech, the Tunku revealed that two alternatives had been open to him. The first course of action involved taking repressive measures against the leaders of the Singapore Government. The second option was to sever all relations with Singapore. The former course was rejected, because it was contrary to his idea of parliamentary democracy and because in the long run it would increase rather than diminish the prospect of communal violence.⁹⁵

With the threat of imminent communal violence staring him in the face, the Tunku was compelled to confront the

situation and then make the most important decision in the short existence of Malaysia. On 22 July 1965, Tunku Abdul Rahman received a reply from Tun Razak stating 'all the senior Cabinet Ministers' (he, Dato Dr. Ismail, Tan Siew Sin, and V. T. Sambanthan) were agreed that no agreement with Singapore could be reached.⁹⁶ and that Singapore should be separated. The full agreement of his Cabinet seniors was probably a decisive event in the Tunku's decision-making, for on 25 July, he wrote back to Tun Razak instructing the latter to 'proceed with the legal chores and the amendments to the Constitution' and to arrange for the recall of Parliament.⁹⁷

The Tunku flew into Singapore in the early hours of 5 August 1965 and met with four of his senior Cabinet Ministers to discuss the situation. The meeting concluded with what was inevitable--that there was no alternative to immediate separation. Therefore, the decision was probably made irreversible on 6 August 1965. That evening, Dr. Goh Keng Swee and several other PAP leaders, who had been in the federal capital for a few days, were informed of the break decision.⁹⁸ On 7 August 1965, the Tunku summoned Lee from a golf game in the Cameron Highlands, some eighty-five miles north of Kuala Lumpur, and told him that if Singapore did not quit the federation there would be bloodshed.⁹⁹ Lee, who hoped the situation could still be saved, found the Tunku completely resolute and reluctantly accepted what he called the Tunku's "intuitive" judgment. When the

parliamentary session opened in Kuala Lumpur, August 9, the Government introduced a constitutional amendment which would formalize the decision reached by the Prime Minister and a handful of selected cabinet members.¹⁰⁰ Earlier, the Singapore Cabinet had reluctantly approved the agreement. For two and one half hours the House of Representatives listened to the Prime Minister's explanations and the stunned opposition's questions and then passed the amendment 126-0, with one opposition member abstaining and the rest absent.¹⁰¹ The separation was announced simultaneously by Lee and the Tunku on 9 August 1965, and took everybody by complete surprise.

It would be a considerable task to assess how close to racial violence Malaysia actually was at the time of the separation. Certainly this was the fundamental reason given by the Tunku for his break decision.¹⁰² It appears that the Tunku's fear of imminent large-scale racial violence was real and genuine. Several American officials who were in Malaysia at the time of the break report that communal tension was indeed high, and that a continuation of the dispute at its present intensity might well have resulted in bloodshed.¹⁰³

However, the expulsion of Singapore from the federation did not completely remove the non-Malay political opposition or the racial problems which plagued the country. This was evidenced by the 13 May 1969 communal riots which followed the West Malaysian elections, and the fear of racial violence which haunted the August 1974 national elections.

Since the separation of Singapore and the removal of the political threat in the form of Lee Kuan Yew and his PAP, how have the overseas Chinese fared in the Malaysian political arena? The following chapters will attempt to assess the extent to which the overseas Chinese have influenced the politics in West Malaysia.

III. FROM THE SEPARATION TO THE 1969 ELECTIONS

A recapitulation of the 1964 elections reveals that the Alliance, the dominant party formed by the coalition of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), had apparently achieved a resounding victory. Alliance candidates were victorious in 89 of 104 seats in the Federal Parliament, fifteen more than in 1959. The People's Action Party (PAP), which directly challenged the MCA for the votes of the Chinese community in eleven constituencies, won only one seat. The opposition from the liberal Left, another intercommunal coalition, the Socialist Front, composed of the (largely Chinese and Indian) Labour Party and the (Malay) Partai Rakyat lost seven of the nine seats it previously held.¹⁰⁴

However, a closer scrutiny of the election showed that the MCA triumphs had been possible only with the assistance of Malay votes, not the confidence of the Chinese community. The MCA's image as a conservative, middle-class party, and its repeated compromises with UMNO on crucial issues, particularly education, damaged its appeal to Chinese voters.¹⁰⁵ In reality, "the members of the MCA were drawn from the property-owning walthy class, big business, finance and industry."¹⁰⁶ Consequently, the mass of the Chinese poorer adult population became disfranchised. By 1969, the challenge of communal appeals became increasingly pronounced.

The post-separation period continued to demonstrate a complete Malay domination of politics at all levels of government, from the national Parliament to the state assemblies. This supremacy was effected by an ethnic group which barely comprised half of the total population in the Federation of Malaysia. Based on the West Malaysian censuses of 1957 and 1970, one can deduce that a comparatively even fluctuation developed in the population of the two major ethnic groups, the Malays and Chinese (Table I and Figures 1-12). The proportion of Chinese in West Malaysia, as delineated in the 1957 and 1970 censuses, decreased from 37% to 35% while the Malay community increased from 50% to 53%. Logically, none of the individual states of West Malaysia exhibited any appreciable percentage shift in the population of their respective Malay and Chinese communities (Table I and Figures 1-11). Since the ratio of the Chinese populace in West Malaysia remained relatively constant between the two censuses, one can compare these figures with the percentage of Chinese occupying important federal and state government posts in 1965 and following years to determine if the Chinese community has been fairly represented in the politics of West Malaysia.

After the separation of Singapore on 9 August 1965, the 22-member Cabinet (Table II) of the Federation of Malaysia included only four Chinese ministers, all from the small but elite MCA. These four members gave the Chinese only an 18% hold on the Cabinet posts. Since the Cabinet is selected

TABLE I

POPULATION OF STATES BY MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS COMPARED WITH PREVIOUS CENSUS

State	Total Population in 1957			Total Population in 1970			
	Total	Chinese	%	Malays	%	Chinese	Malays
Johore	926,850	392,568	42	444,618	47	502,978	682,525
Kedah	701,964	144,057	20	475,563	68	184,263	674,684
Kelantan	505,522	28,861	6	463,118	92	36,668	637,012
Malacca	291,211	120,759	41	143,128	49	160,084	209,543
Negeri Sembilan	364,524	150,055	41	151,408	42	183,444	218,389
Pahang	313,058	108,226	34	179,088	57	157,666	308,986
Penang	572,100	327,240	57	165,092	29	435,366	237,780
Perak	1,221,446	539,334	44	484,530	39	666,237	675,995
Perlis	90,885	15,771	17	71,272	78	19,571	96,048
Selangor	1,012,929	488,657	48	291,411	29	754,348	564,029
Trengganu	278,269	18,228	6	256,246	92	21,725	380,847
Total	6,278,758	2,333,756	37	3,125,474	50	3,122,350	4,685,838
Sabah	454,421*	104,542*	23	1,645*	.4	139,509	18,365
Sarawak	744,529*	229,154*	31	129,300	17	294,020	182,709

* Population figures reflect the data gathered in the 1960 Census.

SOURCES: 1957 Population Census, Report Number 14, and 1970 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, Community Groups.

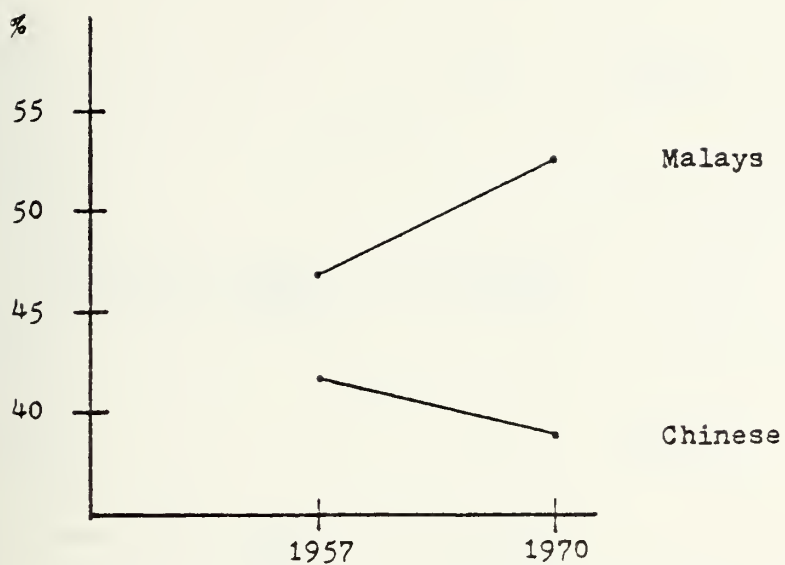


Figure 1. Johore, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

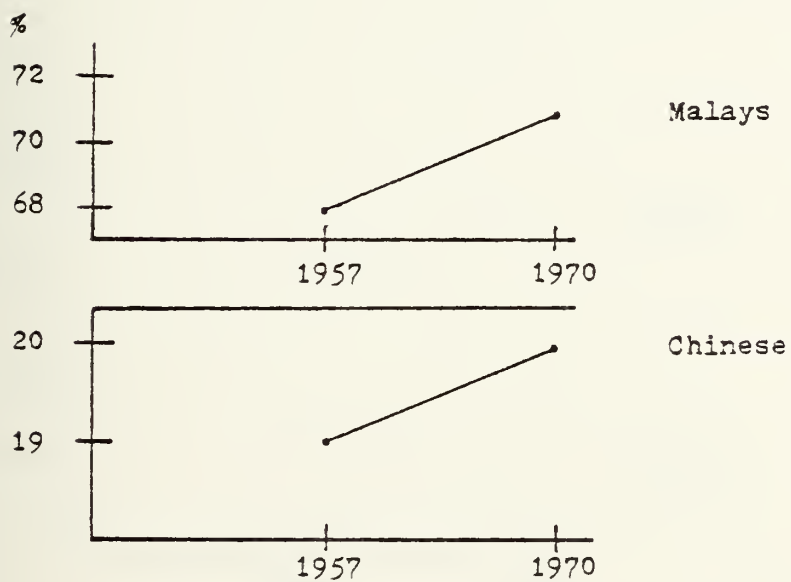


Figure 2. Kedah, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

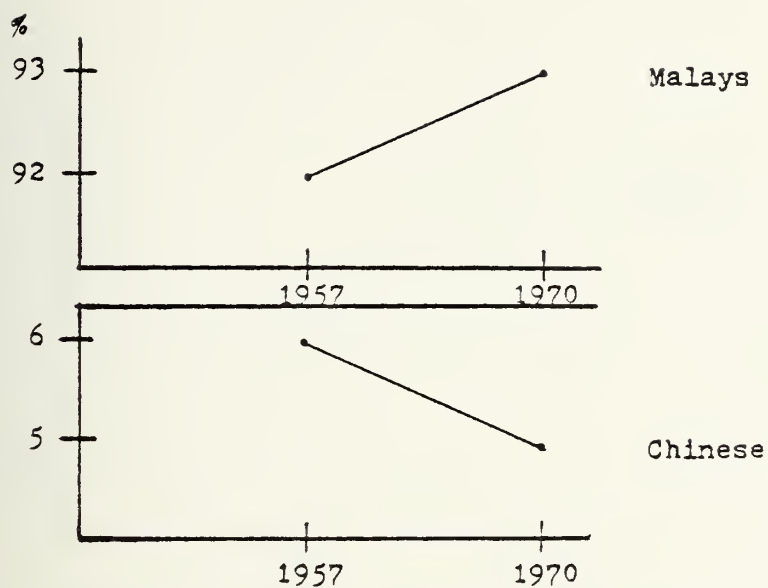


Figure 3. Kelantan, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

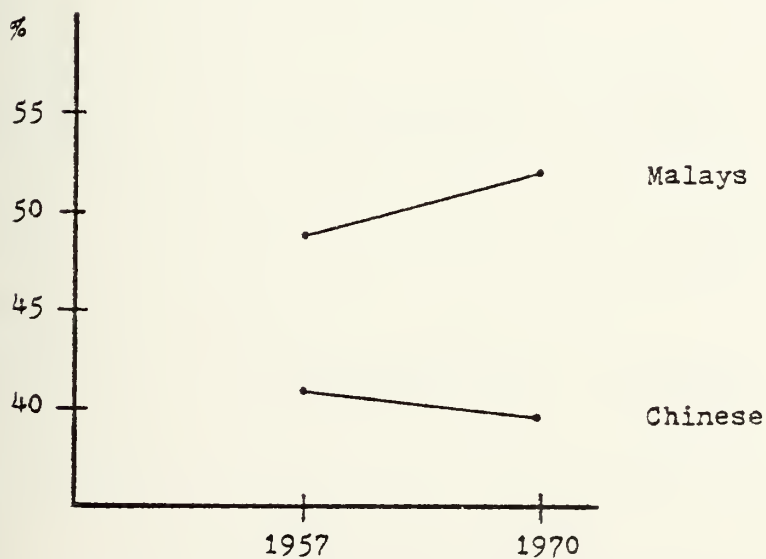


Figure 4. Malacca, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

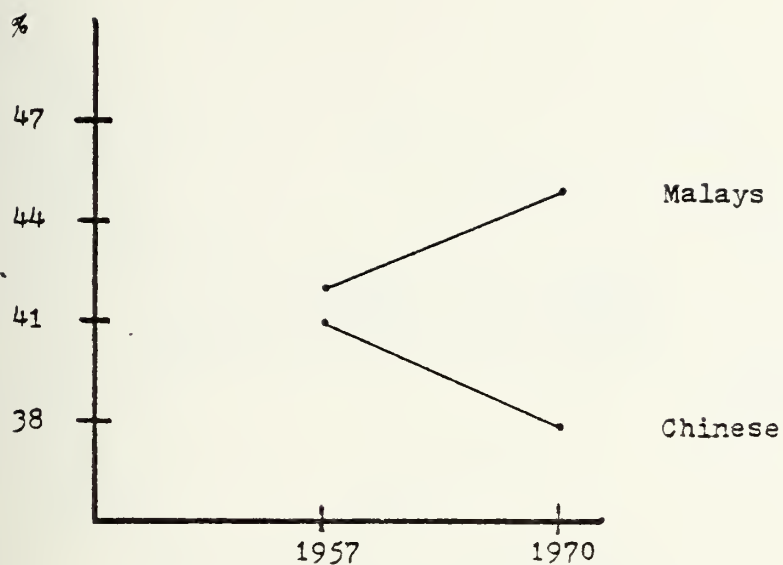


Figure 5. Negeri Sembilan, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

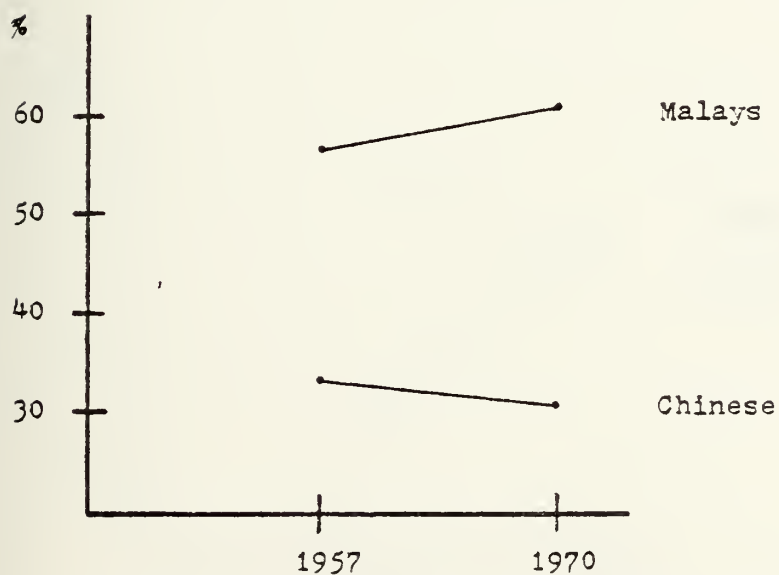


Figure 6. Pahang, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

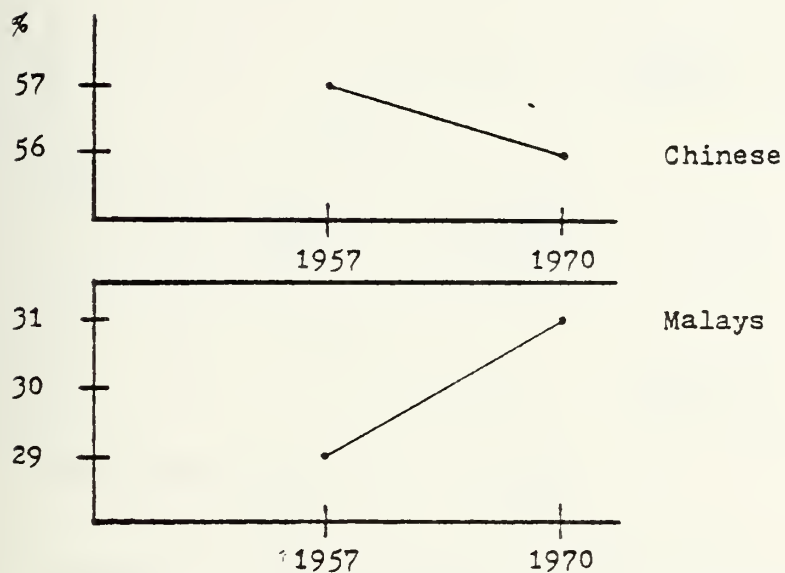


Figure 7. Penang, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

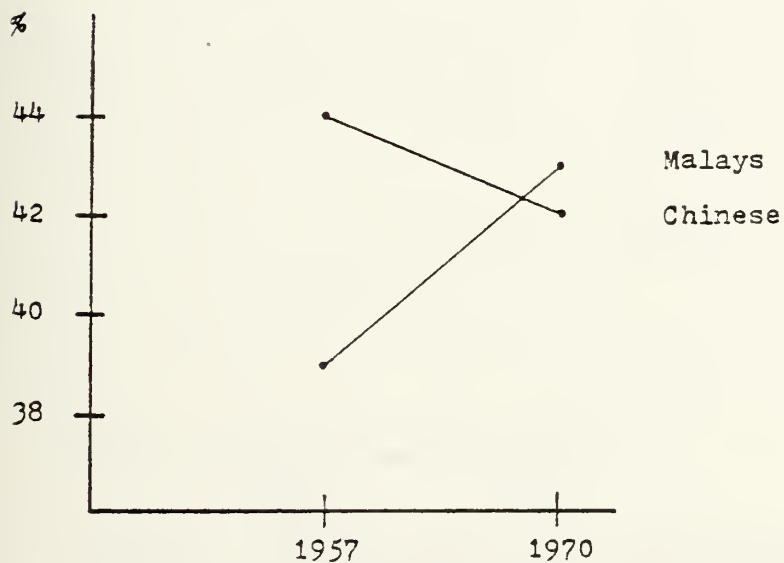


Figure 8. Perak, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

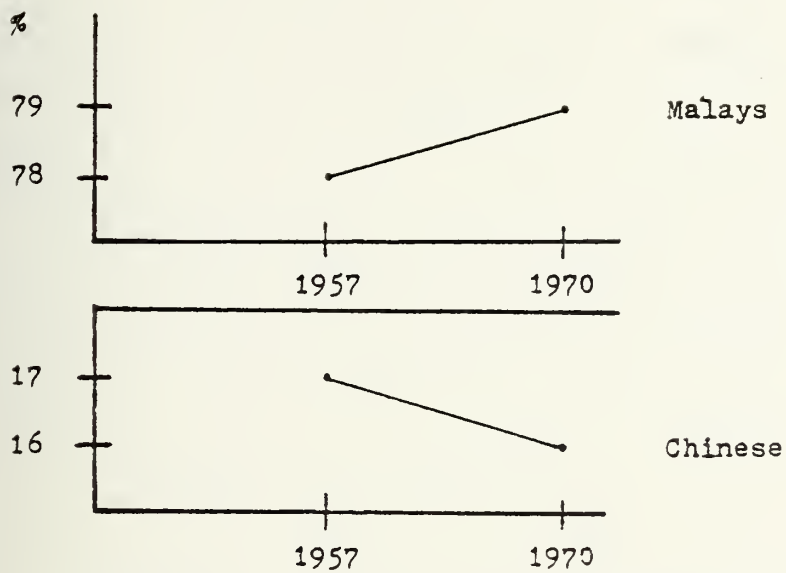


Figure 9. Perlis, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

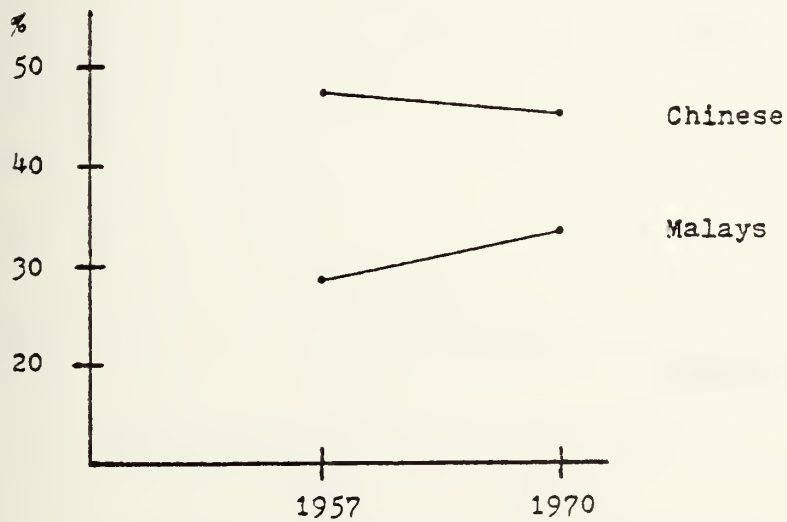


Figure 10. Selangor, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

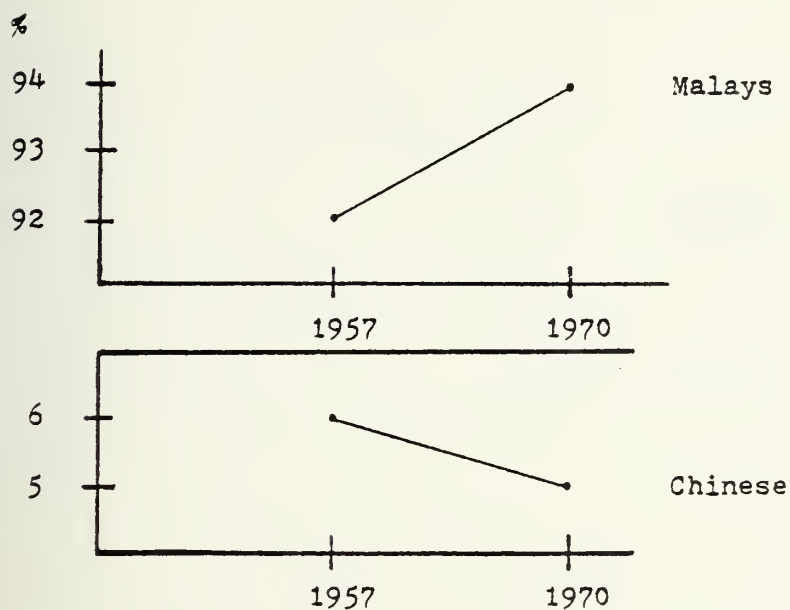


Figure 11. Trengganu, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

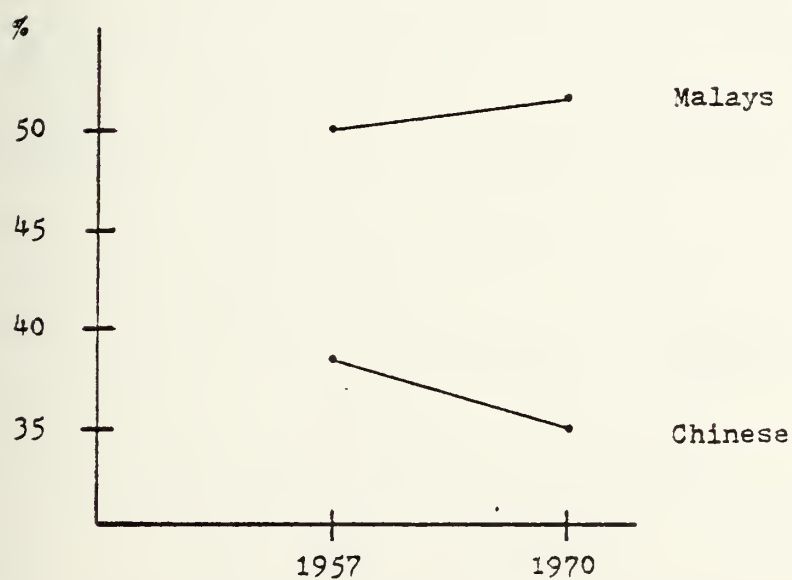


Figure 12. West Malaysia, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

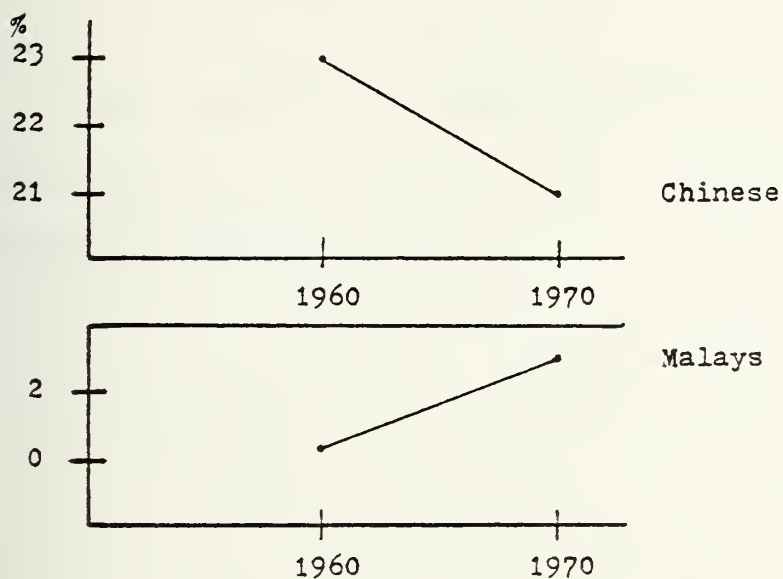


Figure 13. Sabah, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups



Figure 14. Sarawak, Population Distribution by Main Ethnic Groups

TABLE II

1965 CABINET OF THE FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA

Prime Minister	Abdul Rahman
Deputy Prime Minister	Abdul Razak
Minister of External Affairs	Abdul Rahman
Minister of Defence	Abdul Razak
Minister of Home Affairs	Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman
Minister of Justice	Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman
Minister of Finance	Tan Siew Sin **
Minister of National & Rural Development	Abdul Razak
Minister of Culture, Youth & Sports	Abdul Rahman
Minister of Works, Posts & Telecommunications	VT Sambanthan
Minister of Transport	Sardon bin Haji Jubir
Minister of Education	Mohammed Khir Johari
Minister of Health	Bahaman bin Samsudin
Minister of Commerce & Industry	Lim Swee Aun **
Minister of Welfare Services	Abdul Hamid Khan bin Haji Sakhawat Ali Khan
Minister of Local Government & Housing	Khaw Kai-Boh **
Minister of Sarawak Affairs	Jugah anak Barieng
Minister of Labour	V. Manickavasagam
Minister of Information & Broadcasting	Senu bin Abdul Rahman
Minister of Agriculture & Co-operatives	Mohammed Ghazali bin Haji Jawi
Minister of Lands & Mines	Abdul-Rahman bin Ya'kub
Minister without Portfolio	Ong Yoke Lin **

Source: Malay Mail. Malaysia Year Book, 1965 (Kuala Lumpur: Malay Mail Publication, 1966).

Notes: ** Indicates Chinese ministers in the Cabinet; all MCA members.

from among the members of the majority party (in this case, the Alliance) in the lower house, one could not legitimately claim that the Chinese component (all MCA members) in this body truly represented the interest of the entire Chinese community. Therefore, a more realistic impression of Chinese representation in Malaysian politics would exclude any Chinese coalition with the Malay-dominated Alliance or National Front (NF) which was formed in the early 1970's and included the Alliance participants. This categorical definition will be used throughout the thesis to reflect Chinese representation in the Malaysian political scene. Consequently, with the inclusion of this qualifying factor, actual representation of the "ordinary" Chinese in the Cabinet was nihil. The ordinary Chinese (shop-keepers, hawkers, taxi drivers, mechanics) who compose the majority of the Chinese community, are by no means politically, economically or socially united themselves. Dr. Stephen Leong, a historian at the University of Malaya, made the following comments concerning Chinese disunity:

The continued existence of multiple Chinese parties will contribute to the disunity of the Chinese. This is because each party regards itself as the best representative of the Chinese community and in making organised efforts to win the support of the Chinese, they will split the community (at least) three ways.¹⁰⁷

This disparate representational trend was also evident in the Parliament. Table III shows that 33% of the Senate seats were held by ethnic Chinese. Table IV reflects a 29% Chinese representation in the House of Representatives. By disregarding the number of Chinese representatives who were

TABLE III

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION
IN THE SENATE 1965

Name	Party
Ong Yoke Lin (Appointed)	Alliance
Cheah Too Lok (Appointed)	Alliance
Foo See Moi (Appointed)	Alliance
Gan Teck Yeow (Appointed)	Alliance
Khoo Teck Puat (Appointed)	Alliance
Y. T. Lee (Appointed)	Alliance
Lim Hee Hong (Appointed)	Alliance
William Tan (Appointed)	Alliance
T. H. Tan (Appointed)	Alliance
Chan Keong Hon (Appointed)	Alliance
Hong Kim Sui (Appointed)	Alliance
Cheah Seng Khim (Penang)	Alliance
Goh Chek Kin (Trengganu)	Alliance
Hoh Chee Cheong (Pahang)	Alliance
Koh Kim Leng (Malacca)	Alliance
Lee Foong Yee (Negeri Sembilan)	Alliance
Lim Joo Kong (Kedah)	Alliance
Yeah Kian Teik (Perak)	Alliance

Percentage of Chinese members in the Senate = 33% (18 out of 54)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate = 32% (7 out of 22)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate excluding the Alliance Senators = 0% (0 out of 22)

*Remarks in parenthesis indicate the following: the state from which the Senator was elected or that the Senator was appointed.

TABLE IV

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1965

Name	State	Party
Tan Siew Sin	Malacca	ALL
Lim Swee Aun	Perak	ALL
Khaw Kai-Boh	Selangor	ALL
Lee Siok Yew	Selangor	ALL
Ng Kam Poh	Perak	ALL
Chan Chong Wen	Johore	ALL
Chan Seong Yoon	Selangor	ALL
Chan Siang Sun	Pahang	ALL
Chan Chen Wing Sum	Selangor	ALL
Chin Foon	Perak	ALL
Geh Chong Keat	Penang	ALL
Kam Woon Wah	Perak	ALL
Lee San Choon	Johore	ALL
Lee Seck Fun	Perak	ALL
Lim Chong Eu	Penang	UDP
Lim Kean Siew	Penang	SF
Lim Pee Hung	Kedah	ALL
Ng Fah Yam	Perak	ALL
Quek Kai Dong	Negeri Sembilan	ALL
Seah Teng Ngiab	Johore	ALL
Siow Loong Hin	Negeri Sembilan	ALL
Soh Ah Teck	Johore	ALL
Tai Kuan Yang	Kedah	ALL
Tan Chee Khoon	Selangor	SF
Tan Cheng Bee	Penang	ALL
Tan Kee Gak	Malacca	ALL
Tan Toh Hong	Perlis	ALL
Tiah Eng Bee	Johore	ALL
Toh Theam Hock	Perak	ALL
Yech Tat Beng	Perak	ALL

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives =
29% (30 out of 104)

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives
excluding the Alliance Representatives = 3% (3 out of 104)

* ALL - Alliance
UDP - United Democratic Party
SF - Socialist Front

members of the Alliance and the MCA in particular, the following picture of actual Chinese representation in Parliament is depicted: 0% in the Senate and 3% in the lower house. It should be noted that Chinese representation in the Senate will, in all likelihood, remain nonexistent or extremely low. This is due to the procedures for the selection of Senators; 32 are appointed by the Supreme Head of State and the remainder, two from each of the 13 states, are elected by the state assemblies which are controlled by the Malays.

Table V reveals that Chinese political influence in the state assemblies (11) of West Malaysia was also considerably low in comparison to the proportion of the Chinese population in the various states. In the final analysis, one can categorically affirm that the Alliance and, specifically, the Malays maintained an overwhelming stranglehold on the political power in Peninsular Malaysia, from the federal to the state levels, at the time of the separation of Singapore from the federation (9 August 1965).

The post-separation road leading to the elections of 1969 was littered with obstacles which the Alliance and, particularly, the MCA had to hurdle. The problem of language and the related problem of education became controversial issues and eventually exacerbated communal tensions in the intervening years. The year 1967 marked the end of a ten-year period during which English and Malay could be utilized as official languages. Now, only Malay would be

TABLE V

CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE STATE ASSEMBLIES
OF WEST MALAYSIA IN 1965

State Assembly	*Percentage of Chinese Population	Number of Members	Number of Chinese Members	Percentage of Chinese Members	Number of non-Alli- ance Chi- nese Mem- bers	Percentage of non- Alliance Chinese Members
Johore	42	32	11	34	0	0
Kedah	20	24	4	17	0	0
Kelantan	6	30	1	3	0	0
Malacca	41	20	6	30	1	5
Negeri Sembilan	41	24	9	38	0	0
Pahang	34	24	7	29	0	0
Penang	57	24	13	54	7	29
Perak	44	40	15	38	3	8
Perlis	17	12	3	25	0	0
Selangor	48	28	11	39	3	11
Trengganu	6	24	1	4	0	0

SOURCE: Election Commission. Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections, 1964, of the States of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1965).

NOTE: *Figures based on 1957 Population Census.

the official language of the federation. The 1967 National Language Bill provided that other languages be used where necessary as 'translations', thus calming in part Chinese and Indian opposition, and that English be used, with permission of the head of state (Yang di-Pertuan Agong), for 'such official purposes as may be deemed fit', which sounded to many zealous Malays like condoning the official use of English indefinitely.¹⁰⁸

Under the British colonial reign, Chinese and Indian language schools were allowed to flourish independent of federal and local government intervention or subsidy, until the necessity arose to institute health inspections and political controls. While the most prestigious English-language instruction remained the domain of the missionaries and other voluntary efforts, the British colonial authorities advanced and subsidized Malay vernacular education. Under these circumstances, the chances of fashioning a single national educational system was at best dismal, especially in view of the fact that each ethnic group jealously guarded its respective language and traditions. The Chinese viewed Mandarin (dialect) language education as an essential link with their ancestral heritage and the traditions of the homeland. The Indian position basically mirrored that of the Chinese.

The independent Malayan government's posture on this problem was to subsidize even vernacular and English schools, as well as Malay education. In addition, all schools were

required to present a prescribed number of hours' instruction in Malay and, where necessary, in English. At the level of secondary education, the route narrowed; by 1967 no pupils were in Indian (Tamil) language secondary schools, some 22,221 attended Chinese middle schools, which were not eligible for subsidy, 128,625 were in Malay-medium schools, and 312,063 in English-language secondary schools.¹⁰⁹ Although the English language predominated at the University of Malaya, English and Malay instruction were available at the tertiary level. Tertiary education in Chinese was primarily offered at Singapore's Nanyang University, a center of controversy for much of this period because of its political orientation and academic qualifications.

Chinese schools became a crucial, sensitive and volatile issue for a series of reasons. The most obvious reason was the perpetual link which they forged between the culture of the immigrants and their homeland. In lesser Chinese communities, the schools and its officials were the centers of community leadership, power and prestige. Furthermore, recognition of Chinese-language schools was a basic issue because anyone hoping for a better job on the basis of his school certificate must first be guaranteed its accreditation. Finally, Chinese schools represented a sensitive political issue which was only aggravated by the fears of security officials that the schools might be centers for Communist influence. After the failure of the violent

tactics of the Emergency, the Malayan Communist Party turned its attention, it has been asserted, to a non-violent struggle for influence in just those schools.¹¹⁰

In addition to the fears and apprehensions pertaining to the future existence of Chinese-language education, there was a genuine concern for the prospect of English in the Malaysian educational environment. Although English was held in high esteem by members of all ethnic groups and remained the dominant language of instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels of education, it was too alien or, more precisely, "Western" to be an acceptable national language. An irreversible course was then plotted for the abandonment of English at all levels of education despite the expressed doubts of skilled officials concerning the availability of textbooks and qualified instructors at both the secondary and university levels.

As the 1969 election campaign rolled around, the effects of these issues were at the forefront and were to have adverse repercussions on the Alliance and the MCA in particular. When the votes of the 10 May elections were tabulated, the outcome was considered a severe reversal for the Alliance, an almost total rout for the MCA and a tremendous success for the non-Malay opposition. Before Alliance forces had recovered from the shock, jubilation and recriminations touched off racial violence in Kuala Lumpur which soon spread to other areas, lasting several days, and taking an appalling toll in life and property.¹¹¹ The particulars of this cataclysmic event is discussed in the next chapter.

The spotlight of the 1969 General Elections was focused on the contests for the seats in the House of Representatives and the state assemblies. Chinese representation in the lower house of Parliament increased dramatically from 3% to a high of 15% (Table VI). This increase, combined with the gains of other opposition parties, prematurely and temporarily threatened the attainment of a two-thirds majority by the Alliance which is necessary to amend the Constitution. The Alliance eventually gained the two-thirds majority with the victories in the East Malaysian elections. Consequently, despite the significant progress achieved by the opposition Chinese, the Alliance and the Malays continued to dominate the politics of Malaysia. Although the rise in Chinese representation to 15% was indeed astounding, it still failed to remotely approach the 35% Chinese population ratio in Peninsular Malaysia.

At the state level, five state assemblies--Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Penang, Perak, and Selangor--achieved substantial increases (15% or more) in Chinese representation (Table VII). Table VII also reveals that Chinese representation in only one state, Penang, managed to approach and even surpass the population ratio for that state. On the other hand, Chinese representation in the state assemblies of Kelantan, Perlis and Trengganu again failed to rise above the zero percentage mark. Tables VIII and IX show the same zero percentage figure for Chinese representation in the Cabinet and Senate. Despite the serious challenge by the

TABLE VI

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1969

Name	State	Party
Tan Siew Sin	Malacca	ALL
Chan Fu King	Perak	DAP
Chan Siang Sun	Pahang	ALL
Chan Yoon Onn	Perak	PPP
Chen Man Hin	Negeri Sembilan	DAP
Chu Chee Pang	Johore	ALL
Fan Yew Teng	Perak	DAP
Goh Hock Guan	Selangor	DAP
Hon Cheek Foon	Selangor	DAP
Khaw Kai-Boh	Selangor	ALL
Lee Seck Fun	Perak	ALL
Lee Siok Yew	Selangor	ALL
Lee Soon Seng or San Choon	Johore	ALL
Lim Cho Hock	Perak	DAP
Lim Chong Eu	Penang	GRM
Lim Kit Siang	Malacca	DAP
Lim Pee Hung	Kedah	ALL
Loh Jee Mee	Perak	DAP
Ng Hoe Hun	Trengganu	GRM
Richard Ho Ung Hun	Perak	DAP
Seah Teng Ngiap	Johore	ALL
Soh Ah Teck	Johore	ALL
Su Liang Yu	Perak	PPP
Tai Kuan Yang	Kedah	ALL
Tan Chee Khoon	Selangor	GRM
Tan Cheng Bee	Penang	ALL
Tiah Eng Bee	Johore	ALL
Walter Loh Poh Khan	Selangor	DAP
Yeoh Teck Chye	Penang	GRM

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives =
28% (29 out of 104)

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives
excluding the Alliance Representatives = 15% (16 out of 104)

*ALL - Alliance
DAP - Democratic Action Party
GRM - Gerakan Ra'ayat Malaysia
PPP - People's Progressive Party

TABLE VII
CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE STATE ASSEMBLIES
OF WEST MALAYSIA IN 1969

State Assembly	*Percentage of Chinese Population	Number of Members	Number of Chinese Members	Percentage of Chinese Members	Number of non-Alli- ance Chi- nese Mem- bers	Percentage of non- Alliance Chinese Members
Johore	39	32	11	34	1	3
Kedah	19	24	4	17	2	8
Kelantan	5	30	1	3	0	0
Malacca	40	20	8	40	4	20
Negeri Sembilan	38	24	9	38	5	21
Pahang	31	24	6	25	2	8
Penang	56	24	14	58	14	58
Perak	42	40	14	35	13	32
Perlis	16	12	3	25	0	0
Selangor	46	28	12	43	11	39
Trengganu	5	24	1	4	0	0

SOURCE: Election Commission. Report on the Parliamentary (Dewan Ra'ayat) and State Legislative Assembly General Elections 1969 of the States of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1972).

NOTE: *Figures based on 1970 West Malaysian census.

TABLE VIII

1969 CABINET OF THE FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA

Prime Minister	Abdul Rahman
Deputy Prime Minister	Abdul Razak
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Abdul Rahman
Minister of Defence	Abdul Razak
Minister of Home Affairs	Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman
Minister of Justice	Ganie Gilong
Minister of Finance	Abdul Razak (acting)
Minister of National & Rural Development	Abdul Ghafar bin Baba
Minister of Culture, Youth & Sports	Abdul Rahman
Minister of Works, Posts & Telecommunications	VT Sambanthan
Minister of Transport	V. Manickavasalingam (acting)
Minister of Education	Abdul Rahman bin Ya'kub
Minister of Health	Sardon bin Haji Jubir
Minister of Commerce & Industry	Mohammed Khir Johari
Minister of Welfare Services	Fatimah binti Haji Hashim
Minister of Local Government & Housing	Mohammed Khir Johari (acting)
Minister of Sarawak Affairs	Jugah anak Barieng
Minister of Labour	V. Manickavasalingam
Minister of Information & Broadcasting	Hamzah bin Dato Abu Samah
Minister of Agriculture & Co-operatives	Mohammed Ghazali bin Haji Jawi
Minister of Lands and Mines	Abdul Ghafar bin Baba
Minister for Special Duties	Tun Siew Sin **
Minister for Special Duties	Khaw Kai-Boh **
Minister for Special Duties	Lee Sick Yew **

Source: Malay Mail. Malaysia Year Book, 1969 (Kuala Lumpur: Malay Mail Publication, 1970).

Notes: ** Indicates Chinese ministers in the Cabinet; all Alliance members.

TABLE IX

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION
IN THE SENATE 1969

Name	Party
Cheah Toon Lok (Appointed)	Alliance
Foo See Moi (Appointed)	Alliance
Y. T. Lee (Appointed)	Alliance
Hong Kim Sui (Appointed)	Alliance
Lim Hee Hong (Appointed)	Alliance
Gan Teck Yeow (Appointed)	Alliance
Ong Yoke Lim (Appointed)	Alliance
T. H. Tan (Appointed)	Alliance
William Tan (Appointed)	Alliance
Chan Kwong Hon (Selangor)	Alliance
Cheah Seng Khim (Penang)	Alliance
Chong Foo Khin (Negeri Sembilan)	Alliance
Ngau Ken Lock (Pahang)	Alliance
Goh Chek Kin (Trengganu)	Alliance

Percentage of Chinese members in the Senate = 26% (14 out of 54)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate = 23% (5 out of 22)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate excluding the Alliance Senators = 0% (0 out of 22)

*Remarks in parenthesis indicate the following: the state from which the Senator was elected or that the Senator was appointed.

opposition Chinese and the ensuing communal violence, the Alliance and the Malays prevailed in the most tragic election year of Malaysia's young history.

IV. THE MAY THIRTEENTH INCIDENT

On May 13, 1969 racial rioting erupted in Kuala Lumpur with a ferocity and attendant loss of life unparalleled in Malaysia's modern history.¹¹² The events which ignited this explosion were initiated 72 hours earlier as Malaysians proceeded to the polls in the nation's third general election since independence. Commencing on 10 May, indications began to surface which intimated that the dominant multi-ethnic coalitioned Alliance Party--comprised of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)--had sustained unforeseen reverses in the election. On 12 May, the two major, urban-based opposition parties held "victory" marches in Kuala Lumpur.¹¹³ Ecstatic with their success, members of the procession shouted taunts which were calculated to evoke apprehension in Malay bystanders of being pushed aside by increasingly more active ethnic groups. The local UMNO hierarchy responded with their own organized procession on the evening of May 13. The residence of the Chief Minister of Selangor in Kampong Bharu, a large Malay settlement in the predominantly Chinese capital, was selected as the starting point.¹¹⁴ Tensions were high among the people milling about and when the news reached them, about one hour before the procession's scheduled beginning, "that Malay would-be participants . . . had been attacked . . . by Chinese groups

. . . enroute to Kampong Bharu" it caused a "violent anti-Chinese reaction" and several deaths.¹¹⁵ The rapidity and magnitude of the ensuing violence completely surprised the security forces and several days were required to reestablish control.

To understand the development of this, the blackest event in Malaysian history, certain problematic factors involving the ruling incumbent party, the Alliance, require examination. The problem areas for the Alliance were fostered in the tough campaign of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) among the Malays, indisputable heightening of communal tensions, and troubles in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. However, on the Leftist front, the situation seemed secure since the parties of the liberal Left remained divided as in past elections. The founding of Gerakan Ra'ayat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement), a middle-of-the-road party established in 1968 by former Labour Party of Malaysia (LPM) and United Democratic Party (UDP) politicians with the support of the several leading intellectuals, was not the glue for greater cohesiveness but a potential catalyst for intensified friction, bitterness and disunity. Almost total confusion gripped the ranks of the Left as the LPM and the Partai Ra'ayat (People's Party), an agrarian socialist party which failed to rally Malay peasant support, were unsuccessful in reconstructing the Socialist Front (SF). In Perak, the People's Progressive

Party (PPP) and Democratic Action Party (DAP) had arrived at an electoral agreement but the concept of complete unity or even a coalition appeared to be out-of-the-question.

As the realities of the above-mentioned circumstances pervaded, December 1968 saw the catalytic events which were to change the outlook of the Left. On 3 December 1968, the Labour Party operationalized a strategy which specifically exhorted its supporters and anyone else to boycott the elections. No one was surprised at this for the party was in poor shape to fight an election, and, indeed, later evidence was to suggest that it had abandoned the parliamentary road to power over a year before.¹¹⁶ What precipitated the implementation of this tactic was the incarceration (9 November 1968) of prominent Labour Party members as a result of an attack on Malaysian security forces along the Thai-Malay border. These individuals were accused of conspiring with the illegal Malayan Communist Party. The Labour Party asserted that such repressive measures created an environment in which it could not function. In addition to invoking the boycott, the Labour Party responded by ordering the resignation of its representatives in the Dewan Ra'ayat (Parliament) and the State Assemblies. In thousands of leaflets distributed throughout the country, it argued that the November arrests had been carried out, to "make it easier for the Alliance to win the polls" and continued: "The recent mass resignation by the Labour Party members is to protest against the death of democracy."¹¹⁷ The terms which the

Labour Party had delineated for the termination of the boycott such as the repeal of the Internal Security Act, the release of detainees, free elections conducted under specific guidelines, etc., were so unrealistic that the Labour Party's decision not to participate in the election was a "fait accompli." Since only an insignificant number were expected to honor the boycott and abstain from voting, there were approximately 250,000 votes "up-for-grabs" among the remaining left-oriented parties.

The other event which assisted in distorting the picture was the somewhat unforeseen Alliance victory (28 December 1968) in the Selangor State by-election at Serdang, a seat held by the incumbent Partai Ra'ayat. Since DAP and Gerakan split their votes (each entered a candidate), the Alliance was allowed to slip in and capture the seat with a very small majority (only 607 votes). The margin of victory prompted allegations that Gerakan gave the election to the Alliance. The lessons-learned dictated that an electoral pact or coalition was forthcoming and, only two days later, DAP called for such an arrangement. Although Gerakan was apprehensive, a detailed electoral pact between DAP and the latter was cemented and declared on 21 February 1969. Some remarks by Goh Hock Guan (DAP Secretary-General) at the press conference announcing it showed how important he thought Serdang had been: "The experience we have got from this election has been bitter enough and I believe we will never again fight among ourselves and allow the Alliance to sit on our corpses."¹¹⁸

The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), an element of the Alliance, was most distressed about this union. Tan Siew Sin, a leading MCA party official, referred to this arrangement as "a mere marriage of convenience." But he then revealed his real fears when he declared:

If the opposition manages to wrest key seats from the MCA, it will mean that the country will be ruled by an Alliance Government without Chinese participation. It would mean in effect a confrontation between a Government without participation and a practically all-Chinese opposition.¹¹⁹

A result of that extent would spark cataclysmic effects on communal relations. Lee Kuan Yew's concept of Malaysian Malaysia (in contrast to a Malay Malaysia) seemed to have brought communal differences into the open more clearly than ever, and as a result the MCA had been under pressure from those who accused it of selling out to the Malays.¹²⁰ As the UMNO assisted the MCA in fulfilling the majority of its views (except those of the ultra-radicals) throughout the 1965-67 period, they became threatened by the PMIP in the northern four states. With the assistance of Malay language teachers and Muslim Ulamas (jurists), the PMIP solicited the support of the Malay rural electorate and definitely made headway. The announcement in September 1968 by Mohammed Khir Johari that a National University was to be established which would include the Islamic College at Petaling Jaya and use the national language as the medium of instruction, was but one attempt on the part of the Government to show that it cared for Malays, the Malay language and Islam as much as PMIP.¹²¹ The primary participants in the Alliance found

themselves in positions where their flanks were exposed to the threats of communal parties. In the process of deflecting these threats, the inevitability of communal factionalism which festers throughout the Malaysian society, rose to the forefront and adversely affected the internal functioning of the Alliance.

A. THE CAMPAIGN

The prelude which played a significant catalytic role in the May Thirteenth Incident, was the campaign prior to the election. The Alliance, the only party which had won a national election and could win the 1969 election, asked to be evaluated on its past performance and promised in convincing terms what it would accomplish on a national scale in the future. The opposition parties could win certain state governments but no single opposition party entered a sufficient number of candidates to gain the necessary 73 seats in the House of Representatives to control the Central Government.

Consequently, the Alliance relied upon and placed primary emphasis on its achievements in twelve years of independence. Statistical comparisons were offered to illustrate increases in schools, telephones, post offices, villages with electricity, miles of roads, etc., since 1957.¹²² Finance Minister Tun Tan Siew Sin claimed that the Alliance had accomplished more in twelve years than the British had in 200 years.¹²³ He also proclaimed on several occasions that the Alliance was responsible for the establishment of a very large new middle class and the elimination of the

really poor, according to Asian standards. The Alliance also cautioned the electorate of the consequences if they were not reelected--prosperity, stability, racial harmony, and even democracy itself would undoubtedly perish. The Alliance proclaimed themselves as being the only party that was competent to operate the government, was genuinely Malaysian, and was uninhibited by foreign influence and pressure. Some members of the Alliance leadership considered a plain majority as being totally unacceptable. Mohammed Khir Johari, Director of Election Operations, reminded the people that without a two-thirds majority the Alliance could not have introduced the Emergency Laws which included preventive detention without trial.¹²⁴ Without these measures, he maintained, Communism could have triumphed in Malaysia despite an Alliance government: a two-thirds majority was essential for continued security.¹²⁵

The PMIP strategy focused its efforts on retaining control of the state government of Kelantan while major resources were expended to contest the incumbencies in Kedah, Perlis, Perak, and Trengganu. Examples of PMIP campaign tactics:

As the professed champion of the Malays, PMIP attacked, not merely the Chinese and other infidel capitalists, but the Malay rulers and the Establishment generally and demanded a republic. Exploiting the fears, prejudices, and ignorance of the poorer Malays, it solemnly warned them that the choice they had to make was one of 'God or the Tunku.'¹²⁶

Although the essence of the Gerakan and DAP campaigns were similar, their platforms were not identical. Both

parties demanded equality of treatment for all Malaysians and expounded quite frequently about the ideals of democracy. Differences, however, existed on the language issue where the DAP strongly called for the official recognition of Chinese, Tamil and English. Gerakan did not maintain such an extreme position--probably due to their dependency on the Malay vote. However, in the field of education they were in agreement, with DAP demanding the reinstatement of Chinese and Tamil secondary schools, while Lim Chong Eu, Deputy Chairman of Gerakan, stressed that his party favored "the concept of parallel development of the different language media of instruction."¹²⁷ DAP's stance on the language question was more aligned with that of the PPP, champion of the cause for Chinese education whose sphere of influence was seated in Perak state. In Penang, PPP had declined an electoral coalition with Gerakan over this issue but this refusal was considered of no great consequence since the PPP did not possess significant voter support outside of Perak. This political maneuvering was purely academic because neither Gerakan nor DAP could be victorious in the national election, nor could a coalition government be formed. Both parties candidly admitted to this fact. However, Gerakan did aspire to win the state government of Penang. Lim Chong Eu claimed that in the 24 state constituencies his party had "ten very good chances and six fighting chances."¹²⁸ Gerakan also threatened five of the eight parliamentary seats in Penang and was aggressive in Selangor. Consequently,

Gerakan concentrated its main assault in Selangor, Johore, Negeri Sembilan, and Perak although the latter was conceded to the DAP which possessed more candidates than Gerakan in that state.

Partai Ra'ayat did not significantly influence the outcome of the election. It challenged a few seats in Malacca, Pahang and Perlis and was one of two parties (the other being the PMIP) to favor the creation of a republic. Its platform was analogous to the shot pattern of a shotgun blast in that a scattered assortment of unrelated issues which did not constitute any semblance of a policy, were accentuated to attract various sections of the electorate. For example, its demand for support for the Arabs against Israel sought to divert Muslim support from PMIP and UMNO; the call for the end of emergency law restrictions on trade unions and support for the Vietcong were clearly designed to attract the Left; the campaigns against foreign economic domination and the British Defense Agreement and for the re-introduction of local elections were also intended to attract different groups of people.¹²⁹

Since the Labour Party boycotted the elections, it decided to direct its resources and energy in a negative manner. A publicity campaign was launched with the objective of convincing the electorate not to vote. The Alliance responded by declaring that the Labour Party's campaign was unconstitutional since the essence of the endeavor was aimed at the subversion of the established electoral process.

However, banners and posters could be legally displayed provided that permission was obtained. This consent was obviously not granted to the Labour Party. The campaign continued and ensuing attempts to halt Labour's anti-election operation erupted in unpleasant incidents of violence and even death. The implications of the boycott presented difficulties for certain Gerakan candidates whose previous affiliation (membership) with the Labour Party was the crux of the problem. Dr. Tan Chee Khoo, a former Labour Party member, was labeled a traitor by his old party when he ran in the same constituency as a Gerakan candidate. Despite the Labour Party's urgings for its supporters to abstain from voting, the campaign was unsuccessful as Dr. Tan prevailed with the second largest majority in the election.

To the non-Malaysian observer one of the most interesting aspects of the campaign was the extent to which it was dominated by mutual allegations of communalism, anti-Malaysianism and alien influence and subsidization.¹³⁰ No party was exempted from these accusations and no party was beyond utilizing this kind of maligning tactics against opposition parties. This "smear campaign" was designed to turn as many sectors of the population as possible against a certain party. Therefore, it was not enough for the Alliance to just malign the PMIP as being anti-Chinese because to do so may push some Malays into supporting the PMIP. To take this "defamation" operation one step further, the Alliance then made a concerted effort to convince the Malays that the PMIP

was actually Communist and therefore aspired to create a Communist government with the assistance of Peking and Communist personnel from Thailand. In addition, frequently reiterated allegations charged that the PMIP had formulated an electoral agreement with DAP, had collaborated with Gerakan in Penang and Perak, and had accepted funds from Singapore. The Alliance added for good measure that the PMIP was receiving financial support from certain "Middle East" states.¹³¹

The DAP was not immune to the anti-Malay and Singapore-controlled puppet (because it had been a party based in Singapore initially) charges of the Alliance. Fan Yew Teng, a DAP candidate, ridiculed this argument, pointing out that "the Indian Congress Party was founded by an Englishman but this does not mean that Mrs. Gandhi owes allegiance to Harold Wilson."¹³² The Alliance compounded the allegations by accusing the DAP of incorporating an anti-worker and anti-Trade Union position predicated on the actions of its "foreign masters." DAP Secretary-General Goh Hock Guan reacted to these taunts and retaliated by verbally denouncing the Alliance as being anti-Malay.

Accusations of foreign entanglement were widespread and rampant but the specifics normally remained unknown and nebulous. On occasion individual names were revealed. The leadership of the DAP brought up the case of Wu Ling Yu, a Hong Kong-bred British national whom, they charged, had been imported into Malaysia by the Alliance for the express purpose of orchestrating the MCA campaign strategy. This case

was publicized in answer to the deportation of several DAP-linked Singapore citizens on the pretext of "interfering" in Malaysian politics. Tan Siew Sin (Minister of Commerce) denied that Wu was employed in the capacity suggested, but was rather an "expert on Communism" who was employed by MCA "on specialized research" to "study Communist moves in Malaysia and to counteract them."¹³³

Implications of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) involvement were also brought out during the campaign. A Partai Rakyat candidate in Malacca claimed that two Alliance Cabinet Ministers had been in the pay of CIA.¹³⁴ Dr. Tan Chee Khoo alluded to the fact that the renomination of one retiring MCA MP (Minister of Parliament) had been rejected by the party because he was a CIA agent and further claimed that Tan Siew Sin had knowledge of the individual's identity. Ministers denied this, of course, but suspicions were aroused further when the U.S. Embassy also issued a denial.¹³⁵

One unusual development relating to illegal foreign contributions involved the Prime Minister of Malaysia and the PMIP Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of Kelantan, Dato Mohammed Asri. These two government officials declared that their respective parties had never accepted contributions of foreign origin and indicated that they were prepared to reinforce their declarations by voluntarily swearing solemn oaths on the Holy Koran. Although these two pillars of Islam were then informed that an oath on the Koran was contrary to Muslim Law, they nevertheless did each swear an oath in separate

mosques on 8 May.¹³⁶ In April, Abdul Razak and Tan Siew Sin had both admitted that the parties of the Alliance had received funds from locally based foreign firms, but only "on a voluntary basis, with no strings": none of the money actually came from abroad, they declared.¹³⁷ Related to this question of party funds was the persistent charges that the Alliance manipulated government capital, assets and personnel for the advancement of their election aims. This situation had progressed to such a state that official information could not be deciphered from election propaganda. Similarly, charges were frequently made that civil servants were being employed for party purposes,¹³⁸ and this no doubt extended to include the police and information services.

But the "blackest" and most serious page in the campaign accounts was the resort by ministers to "political blackmail" and "bribery" tactics. There is no need to quote opposition statements to prove this charge since Alliance leaders made no attempt to disguise their meaning.¹³⁹ On repeated occasions, Alliance leaders overtly pressured the people through warnings which threatened the cutoff of present and future subsidies from the Central Government for economic development projects if opposition governments were elected. Obviously, the reverse was true for Alliance-controlled state governments. For example, Penang was the most lucrative target for the opposition to unseat the Alliance. Gerakan's promises revolved around economic progress especially the construction of a bridge to the mainland. The Alliance

responded with a tough position which jeopardized the hope for such a project if an Alliance state government was not elected. One final aspect of "economic development fund" irregularities was the maladministration by the Alliance of foreign aid which, in part, constitutes the appropriations for the national economic development program.

B. THE ELECTION

West Malaysia went to the polls on 10 May 1969 and it was not until the returns began filtering in that the quiet, calm confidence of the UMNO constituency in the electoral process became riddled with uncertainty. The elections in East Malaysia were programmed for the period 10-25 May in Sabah and 10 May to 7 June in Sarawak but the electoral process was postponed because of the violence which erupted in West Malaysia on 13 May. Election day in West Malaysia was relatively tranquil with the exception of a few minor confrontations reported. The voter turnout, however, was 6.1% lower (Table X) than the 1964 election. This could be explained by the fact that in 1964 the very concept of Malaysia was under question and its survival as a state threatened, whereas no such issue stirred the electorate in 1969, but another factor could have been the Labour Party's call for a boycott.¹⁴⁰ In any case, the evidence was speculative and not conclusive.

In the Parliamentary elections, the Alliance gained 66 seats (Table XI), and combined with the ten candidates running uncontested in Sabah, a majority was assured in the

TABLE X

1969 Parliamentary Elections in West Malaysia, showing turnout and percentage polled by the various parties¹

	Turnout ²	Alliance ³	PMIP ³	DAP	Gerakan	PPP ³	P. Rakyat	Others
Johore	71.6 (80.9)	67.6 (71.7)	4.0 (1.4)	21.5	4.2	----	----	2.7
Kedah	75.6 (76.4)	53.4 (68.6)	41.1 (25.1)	----	5.5	----	----	----
Kelantan	74.6 (80.1)	47.5 (42.9)	52.4 (56.9)	----	----	----	----	0.1
Malacca	76.8 (84.2)	45.2 (66.2)	18.4 (3.7)	22.8	----	----	13.6	----
N. Sembilan	74.5 (80.0)	46.4 (59.3)	16.3 (-----)	35.5	----	----	----	1.8
Pahang	71.0 (77.6)	60.8 (71.1)	24.4 (10.8)	----	----	----	14.7	----
Penang	77.5 (83.5)	36.9 (47.3)	7.5 (2.7)	11.1	44.5	.04 (-----)	----	----
Perak	72.3 (79.5)	43.2 (55.6)	17.9 (10.5)	16.1	3.7	18.8 (16.6)	----	0.4
Perlis	80.2 (81.6)	51.2 (63.2)	42.1 (36.7)	----	----	----	6.7	----
Selangor	65.8 (73.3)	43.8 (53.9)	7.3 (2.4)	31.4	17.5	----	----	----
Trengganu	75.5 (77.4)	50.0 (56.5)	50.0 (32.1)	----	----	----	----	----
Total								
W. Malaysia	72.8 (78.9)	48.4 (58.5)	23.8 (14.6)	13.7	8.6	3.9 (3.4)	1.2	0.4

Note. ¹The statistics for 1969 are based on data published in the *Straits Times* of 10, 12 and 13 May, 1969. Those for 1964 are based on the report of the Election Commission (1965).

²The turnout is the percentage polling in seats contested, i.e. in 94 seats only.

³1964 figures are given in parenthesis. DAP and Gerakan did not exist in 1964 and Partai Rakyat formed part of the Socialist Front (SF). In 1964, the SF received 16.1%, People's Action Party (PAP) 2.0%, and United Democratic Party (UDP) 4.3% of the poll, nationally. The SF won over 30% of the votes in Selangor and Penang, and over 20% in Johore, Malacca and Negri Sembilan. UDP won 18% of the votes in Penang.

TABLE XI

1969 Parliamentary and State Elections in West Malaysia: Seats won by the Various Parties
 P = Parliamentary S = State 1964 figures, where appropriate, are in brackets.

	Alliance		PMIP		DAP		Gerakan		PPP		P.Rakyat		Others	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	S	S	S	S
Johore	16 (16)	30 (32)	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- 1	-- --	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	1	--
Kedah	9 (12)	14 (24)	3 (--)	8 (--)	-- --	-- --	2	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
Kelantan	4 (2)	11 (9)	6 (8)	19 (21)	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
Malacca ¹	2 (4)	15 (18)	-- (--)	-- (--)	1 4	-- 1	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
N. Sembilan	3 (6)	16 (24)	-- (--)	-- (--)	3 8	-- --	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
Pahang	6 (6)	20 (24)	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- --	-- 1	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	2	--	1	--
Penang	2 (6)	4 (18)	-- (--)	-- (--)	1 3	5 16	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	1	--
Perak	9 (18)	19 (35)	1 (--)	1 (--)	5 6	1 2	4 (2)	12 (5)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
Perlis	2 (2)	11 (11)	-- (--)	1 (1)	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
Selangor	9 (12)	14 (24)	-- (--)	-- (--)	3 9	2 4	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	1	--
Trengganu	4 (5)	13 (21)	2 (1)	11 (3)	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- (--)	-- (--)	-- (--)	--	--	--	--
Total	1969 66	167	12	40	31 31	8 26	4	12	2	4	--	--	4	--
W. Malaysia	1964 (89)	(240)	(9)	(25)	-(2)	-(2)	(2)	(5)	-(2)	-(2)	--	--	-(2)	--

Notes: ¹In Malacca there were contests in only 3 seats, polling Selatan being postponed.

²The DAP and Gerakan did not exist in 1964, although their predecessors the PAP and UDP fought the election. The DAP won one Parliamentary seat in Selangor, and UDP one Parliamentary and four State seats in Penang. Partai Rakyat was part of the Socialist Front which won two Parliamentary seats (one each in Penang and Selangor and eight seats in the States of Selangor, Penang and Malacca, four and two each respectively). Of the Independents who stood in 1964, none was successful.

144-member Dewan Ra'ayat. Whether a two-thirds majority would be eventually achieved rested on the outcome of the elections in East Malaysia. But this question was not immediately answered, again because of the suspension of the elections.

The Alliance was understandably astonished by its sub-standard performance--suffering a decrease of 25% of its seats. Although the UMNO lost seven seats and the MIC one, the MCA pillar collapsed unexpectedly. Its candidates were defeated in Penang, Perak, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan. The aftermath vividly revealed that the MCA had retained only 13 seats as compared to 27 in the 1964 contest. This trend was also mirrored in the State Assembly elections. In spite of the losses in Perlis, Trengganu and Kedah to the PMIP, the most significant setbacks were registered in the west coast states which were defended by the MCA. Tan Siew Sin announced on 13 May, 1969 that his party would not participate in an Alliance government since the election had shown that the MCA had lost the confidence of the Chinese community.¹⁴¹ The single most important variable which precipitated this adverse shift in voter confidence and eventually led to the defeat of the MCA candidates, was the fact that in most constituencies they confronted a single adversary of the Left because of the electoral pacts and the withdrawal of the Labour Party. The MCA was, then, victimized by a combination of a swing towards the Malay and Chinese communal parties and a better organization of the (largely) Chinese parties.¹⁴²

C. MAY THIRTEENTH

The mass amok which took place in Kuala Lumpur on 13 May had its origins in the perceived change in the ethnic configuration of power and the resultant sense of anxiety and alarm.¹⁴³ The outcome of the election appeared to have been an excuse or opportunity for the riots rather than the actual cause of them. An important feature of note was the fact that in the initial stages the violence was predominantly confined to Kuala Lumpur. Parts of that city, such as Kampong Bharu, were thickly populated by Malays who recently migrated from the countryside, often from villages in other states, and who lived in poor conditions.¹⁴⁴ A significant number of these rural immigrants were unemployed and were able to observe in Kuala Lumpur the stark contrast between their poverty or misfortune and the wealth of some Chinese--a source of communal division and rising expectations. These poverty-stricken people resided in isolated ghettos apart from the rest of the city under circumstances reminiscent of the village and retained the values of the kampong. Given such circumstances and the flamboyant victory parade of the (Chinese) Left on 12 May, it needed only some irresponsible oratory to inflame Malay passions.¹⁴⁵ This was furnished by UMNO leaders at a party assembly on the evening of 13 May.

The time and location of the first lethal blows were neither accidents nor coincidents. The Selangor results (political stalemate) brought emotions of anger, frustration

and apprehension to the surface within the ranks of the resident UMNO organization. The catalyst that exacerbated these emotions and sent the temperature to the boiling point was the way in which DAP and Gerakan supporters in Kuala Lumpur behaved on Sunday and Monday (11 and 12 May).¹⁴⁶ Realizing that the UMNO branch in Selangor was in a precarious situation, bands of youthful sympathizers from the DAP and Gerakan headed towards Dato Harun's (Chief Minister of Selangor) house in Jalan Raya Muda and rudely invited him to quit this state residence since he was allegedly no longer Menteri Besar.¹⁴⁷ During the processions which were conducted to celebrate the Opposition's triumphs, youthful Chinese and Indian constituents hurled insults and abuses at UMNO supporters and Malays they encountered or at Malay residences they proceeded by. The slogans which were vociferated (substantiated by Malay eyewitnesses) indicated that the Opposition considered the political standoff in Selangor as a direct defeat for the ruling Malay political party and an indirect defeat for the Malay people. Some of these were: "Kapal layar bochor!" (The sailing boat is leaking!); "Melayu sudah jatuh!" (Malays have fallen!); "Melayu sekarang ta'ada kuasa lagi!" (Malays now no longer have power!); "Kuala Lumpur sekarang China punya!" (Kuala Lumpur now belongs to the Chinese!); "Melayu boleh baleh kampong!" (Malays may return to their villages!).¹⁴⁸

The visit to the quarters of Dato Harun and the slogans evoked vigorous reactions among Malay residents in the Greater Kuala Lumpur district especially Dato Harun's supporters,

and led to an overflow of racial emotions. The most aroused reactionaries were the young Kampong Bharu UMNO campaign workers who bitterly resented the behavior of the Opposition Chinese and Indian youths. In a countermove, they urged Ahmad Razali, the Political Secretary to Dato Harun, to obtain permission for them to hold an UMNO procession in order to show to the Opposition parties that "UMNO, too, had a good reason to celebrate as they were not defeated in the State elections."¹⁴⁹ UMNO party consent was given and a police permit granted. Ahmad said he spent four hours on the night of 12 May visiting seven Malay-inhabited villages in the Greater Kuala Lumpur district, namely, Kampong Dato Keramat, Gombak (8½ Milestone), Kampong Petaling, Kawasan Melayu, Kampong Haji Abdullah Hukom, Kampong Pandan Dalam and Kampong Jaya, in order to contact UMNO leaders and mobilize support for the counter-demonstration scheduled to start from Dato Harun's house the next day at 7.30 p.m.¹⁵⁰ Official government reports did not reveal the exact time when the crowd began to build but police estimates of the gathering ranged from between 4,000 to 5,000 people. Some of the would-be demonstrators carried sticks and banners and "a few were seen to be armed with parangs and kris(es)."¹⁵¹ At about this moment, another police officer commanding a field force testified that " . . . a Malay youth, riding a scooter, heading towards the Menteri Besar's residence shouted 'Setapak sudah kena langgar' (Setapak has been attacked)."¹⁵² Mass violence subsequently erupted and Dato

Harun's appeals for calm among his supporters fell on deaf ears. The first killings and burnings were said to have been carried out by young Malays from this meeting in the Chinese section in Kampong Bharu.¹⁵³ The casualty figures and the flooding of the refugee centers by predominantly Chinese and Indian elements were definite indications of who maintained the initiative. During this period of unrest there were widespread reports of great leniency exhibited by the army towards the Malay rioters.

The explosion of inter-communal violence in Kuala Lumpur on 13 May precipitated the declaration of a state of emergency which led to the suspension of parliamentary democracy and the banning of party politics. The elections in Sarawak and Sabah were subsequently suspended. An eight-man "National Operations Council" (NOC) under the direction of Tun Razak was formed to co-ordinate the work of the army and police in the restoration of law and order, and not to supersede the Cabinet.¹⁵⁴ The NOC reported the following results:

Official data on the May 13 disturbances reported 196 persons died and 439 were injured. Of those who died, 25 were Malays and 143 were Chinese. More than 9,000 persons were arrested between May 13 and July 31. The majority were Chinese.¹⁵⁵ (See Table XII)

John Slimming estimated the death toll at 800, while the homeless refugees who fled the area reached more than 6,000 after the initial five days.¹⁵⁶

The May Thirteenth Incident is just another example of the racial conflict between the Chinese and Malays which permeates all facets (economic, political and social) of Malaysian society. The roots of this conflict have been

TABLE XII

Casualties of Communal Violence, May 13, 1969-July 31, 1969

	Deaths*				Injured by Firearms				Injured by Other Weapons			
	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others
Perlis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kedah	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Penang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Perak	1(1)	9(1)	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	-	-
Selangor	22(8)	123(34)	12(5)	15(1)†	37‡	125	17	1	82	129	9	15‡
Negeri Sembilan	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Malacca	1(1)	6	-	-	-	-	4	-	5	5	-	-
Johore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Kelantan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trengganu	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Perang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25(10)	143(35)	13(6)	15(1)	37	125	17	1	90	145	9	15

Source: Government of Malaysia, *The May 13 Tragedy, A Report* (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 1969), pp. 88-90.

* Numbers killed by gunshots in parentheses.

† Highly decomposed bodies found in Klang River and in mining pools.

‡ Includes three constables.

§ Includes Eurasians, Pakistanis, and Singaporeans.

confined to ethnic differences but, more recently, it has pitted an economically-dominant Chinese community with aspirations of political and social equality against a politically-dominant Malay community with desires for economic power. The realities of the May Thirteenth Incident are not unique to Malaysia but prevalent in almost every nation in Southeast Asia. The common denominator in each case is an overseas Chinese community which normally controls the economic well-being of that particular country.

V. THE 1974 AND 1978 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The period between the General Elections of 1969 and 1974 saw the stabilization of the internal unrest caused by the May 13 incident in Malaysia. This four-year period also witnessed three significant regional developments which indirectly provided stability in Malaysia and strengthened the Alliance political stock for the 1974 General Elections. First, the scale down of the Vietnam War and the accelerated extrication of United States forces from the conflict were major steps in reducing hostilities in the region. The reduction of U.S. military involvement failed to deter the flow of American business investments into the region (including Malaysia)--more regional offices, joint enterprises, wholly-owned subsidiaries, and factories surfaced. Second, President Richard Nixon's historic trip to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in February 1972 (followed by the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and the PRC) was a dramatic event for both nations as well as the entire region. This milestone undoubtedly led to better relations between the Malaysian government and the Malaysian Chinese. Finally, the increasing importance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which advocated the neutralization of the region, lessened the tensions between Malaysia and her immediate neighbors. These developments

impacted quite favorably upon Malaysia and the Alliance (especially in the 1974 General Elections) as the stability of the country was significantly enhanced.

Within Malaysia itself the following events occurred which set the scene for the elections of 1974: the long-awaited resignation in September 1970 of the prime minister-ship by Tengku Abdul Rahman in favor of Tun Abdul Razak who subsequently demonstrated sound administrative talents and wide-ranging qualities of leadership; a change in the ruling coalition, the Alliance, with the supplementation of former opposition parties to form a wider and looser coalition, the National Front; a steady increase in the economic performance of the country since 1969; an absence of racial violence during the intervening years; and the implementation of federal budgets designed to increase government spending, counter recession and minimize the impact of inflation.

A. THE 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The post-mortem of the 1974 General Elections in Malaysia revealed that the Barisan Nasional (BN) or National Front (NF), a coalition of nine political parties from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, had achieved a surprisingly easy and complete victory. The NF included the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)--all part of the Alliance, Peninsular Malaysia--together with the Partai Islam (PAS), the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), the People's Progressive Party (PPP), the Sabah Alliance,

the Sarawak Alliance, and the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP). In executing this sweeping triumph, the NF captured 104 of the 114 Parliamentary seats (91%) in West Malaysia. This means that the NF was much stronger in 1974 at the "Federal level than the Alliance was in 1959, at the beginning of the First Malayan Parliament, or in 1964, at the beginning of the First Malaysian Parliament, or in 1969, at the beginning of the Second Malaysian Parliament."¹⁵⁷

The tremendous triumph of the NF becomes increasingly devastating if one reviews the election results in the various states. For the first time since 1959, the coalition in control of the Federal Government was also in charge of each and every state in the Federation.¹⁵⁸ To add to the overkill, the NF also seized three state assemblies--Kelantan, Pahang and Perlis--without conceding a single seat to the opposition Chinese. The opposition Chinese in the remaining state assemblies especially in Peninsular Malaysia, could not muster sufficient seats to politically influence the affairs in their respective states.

While the NF's victory was overwhelming, the reverse was true for the opposition Chinese. Chinese membership in the Cabinet consisted of four ministers, constituting only 17% of that body, but all were members of the NF (Table XIII). Chinese representation in the Senate and the House of Representatives were also low, 0% and 8%, respectively (Tables XIV-XV). In five state assemblies--Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perlis, and Trengganu--Chinese representation drew a total

TABLE XIII

1974 CABINET OF THE FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA

Prime Minister	Abdul Razak
Deputy Prime Minister	Hussein Onn
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Abdul Razak
Minister of Defence	Abdul Razak
Minister of Home Affairs	Muhammad Ghazali Bin Shafie
Minister of Finance	Hussein Onn
Minister of Culture, Youth & Sports	Ali Bin Haji Ahmad
Minister of Transport & Works	Abdul Ghani Bin Gilong
Minister of Education	Mahathir Bin Mohammad
Minister of Health	Lee Siok Yew **
Minister of Trade & Industry	Hamzah Bin Haji Abu Samah
Minister of Welfare Services	Aishah binte Abdul Ghani
Minister of Local Government & Environment	Ong Kee Hui **
Minister of Labour & Manpower	Lee San Choon **
Minister of Information & Special Functions	Ahmad Rithaudeen Al-Haj Bin Tengku Ismail
Minister of Agriculture & Development	Abdul Ghafar Bin Baba
Minister of Lands and Mines	Mohammed Asri Bin Haji Muda
Minister of Communications	V. Manickavasagam
Minister of Law and Attorney-General	Abdul Kadir Yusof
Minister of General Planning & Socio- Economic Research	Abdul Teib Bin Mahmud
Minister of Power, Technology & Research	Mohammed Bin Yaacob
Minister of Housing & New Villages	Michael Chen Wing Sum **
Minister of Primary Industries	Musa Hitam
Minister without Portfolio	Mohammed Khir Johari

Source: Malay Mail. Official Malaysia Year Book, 1974 (Kuala Lumpur: Malay Mail Publication, 1975).

Notes: ** Indicates Chinese ministers; all National Front members.

TABLE XIV

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION
IN THE SENATE 1974

Name	Party
Ong Yoke Lin (Appointed)	NF
Gan Teck Yeow (Appointed)	NF
Kam Woon Wah (Appointed)	NF
Law Hiang Ding (Appointed)	NF
Lim Keng Yaik (Appointed)	NF
Seah Teng Ngaib (Appointed)	NF
Wee Khoo Hock (Appointed)	NF
Chan Kwong Hon (Selangor)	NF
Chong Foo Khin (Negeri Sembilan)	NF
Chua Ching Cheng (Malacca)	NF
Lee Loy Seng (Perak)	NF
Lim Ah Sitt (Johore)	NF
Ngau Ken Lock (Pahang)	NF
Oh Siew Aun (Perak)	NF
Ooi Eng Hong (Kedah)	NF

Percentage of Chinese members in the Senate = 28% (15 out of 54)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate = 36% (8 out of 22)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate excluding the National Front (NF) Senators = 0% (0 out of 22)

*Remarks in parenthesis indicate the following: the state from which the Senator was elected or that the Senator was appointed.

NF - National Front

TABLE XV

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1974

Name	State	Party
Au How Cheong	Perak	NF
Chan Siang Sun	Pahang	NF
Chen Man Hin	Negeri Sembilan	DAP
Chen Wing Sum (Michael)	Selangor	NF
Chian Heng Kai	Perak	DAP
Chin Hon Ngian	Johore	NF
Chong Hon Nyan	Malacca	NF
Chong, Rosemary	Selangor	NF
Fan Yew Teng	Perak	DAP
Farn Seong Than	Selangor	DAP
Goh Cheng Teik	Penang	NF
Hee Tien Lai	Johore	NF
Ho Ung Hun (Richard)	Perak	NF
Lee Boon Peng	Negeri Sembilan	NF
Lee Lan Thye	Selangor	DAP
Lee San Choon	Johore	NF
Lee Siok Yew	Selangor	NF
Leong Khee Seong (Paul)	Perak	NF
Lew Sip Hon	Selangor	NF
Lim Ah Ying or Kiam Hoon	Kedah	NF
Lim Che Hock	Perak	DAP
Lim Chong Eu	Penang	NF
Lim Kit Siang	Malacca	DAP
Ling Liong Sik	Penang	NF
Loh Fook Yen	Johore	NF
Mah, Albert	Penang	NF
Mak Hon Ting or Hon Kun	Perak	NF
Ngan Siong Ming	Perak	DAP
Neo Yu Pan	Johore	NF
Oh Keng Seng	Selangor	DAP
Oo Gin Sun	Kedah	NF
Su Liang Yu	Perak	NF
Tan Chee Khoo	Selangor	NF
Tan Cheng Bee	Penang	NF

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives =
26% (30 out of 114)

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives
excluding the National Front (NF) Representatives = 15 (9 out
of 114)

*NF - National Front and DAP - Democratic Action Party

blank, failing to seat a single member (Table XVI). In the remainder of the state assemblies, the verdict was not encouraging as Chinese representation did not remotely approach the Chinese population percentages for these states (Table XVI).

What factors could explain the NF's sweeping success? First, there was the NF itself which expanded its voter appeal by incorporating six additional political parties into their coalition. In view of this expanded coalition, the voting alternatives for those Chinese who could vote were somewhat limited to casting their ballots for the NF's Chinese candidates, sticking with the opposition Chinese candidates whose chances of winning were at best minimal, or abstaining. Tun Razak's (Prime Minister) oft-repeated warning to the community (Chinese) that failure to elect the BN's Chinese candidates would result in an all-Malay government must have convinced a lot of Chinese voters about the danger of rejecting the coalition.¹⁵⁹ In Tun Razak's words:

They (the Chinese and Indians) must vote non-Malay candidates from the National Front, otherwise, they will have no representatives in the government which will be established. . . Even without non-Malay candidates from the Barisan Nasional we can establish a government.¹⁶⁰

It is significant that Datuk Lee San Choon, the Acting MCA President, responded to the warning by urging the Chinese to "vote Chinese who can play a role in government."¹⁶¹ It may have been with this purpose in mind that the Chinese backed the MCA, the only Chinese-based party in the NF with a long history of cooperation with the dominant Malay elite. In

TABLE XVI

CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE STATE ASSEMBLIES
OF WEST MALAYSIA IN 1974

State Assembly	*Percentage of Chinese Population	Number of Members	Number of Chinese Members	Percentage of Chinese Members	Number of non-NF Chinese Members	Percentage of non- NF Chinese Members
Johore	39	32	11	34	1	3
Kedah	19	26	3	12	0	0
Kelantan	5	36	1	3	0	0
Malacca	40	20	6	30	3	15
Negeri Sembilan	38	24	7	29	2	8
Pahang	31	32	8	25	0	0
Penang	56	27	14	52	4	15
Perak	42	42	15	36	8	19
Perlis	16	12	2	17	0	0
Selangor	46	33	7	21	2	6
Trengganu	5	28	1	4	0	0

SOURCE: Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 26 August 1974.

NOTE: *Figures based on 1970 West Malaysian census.

NF = National Front

addition to this expanded organization, the men, money and machinery at the NF's disposal undoubtedly played an important role in the annihilation of the opposition.

A second factor, intangible but no less significant, was the specter and intimidation of the 13 May 1969 communal riots between Malays and Chinese which hung over the election. The Razak Government took stringent precautions to dampen emotions and prevent another outbreak of violence. Public discussions of controversial racial issues were prohibited, as were post-election parades and demonstrations. No rallies were permitted on 23 August 1974, the last day of campaigning, on the pretext that breathing space was necessary to allow for the deployment of 6,000 policemen.¹⁶² There was no violence and no overt tension--although the turnout was down somewhat from 1969, suggesting that some people's old fears kept them from the polls.¹⁶³ Official figures showed that 64% of the four million eligible voters voted in what was the fourth general election since this tropical Southeast Asian nation gained independence from Britain in 1957.¹⁶⁴

Other factors which played major roles included the Government's electoral gerrymandering and blackmailing tactics. The Government, taking advantage of a constitutional requirement to redraw district lines every 10 years, gerrymandered districts blatantly to make things as bleak as possible for the opposition.¹⁶⁵ This tactic was so blatant that not even lip service appeared to be paid to the principle of one man,

one vote. The election results substantiate the successful application of the gerrymandering technique. Although the Government won nearly 90 percent of the parliamentary seats, it got only about 60 percent of the vote.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) captured 20% of the popular vote, much more than in the last election, but only managed to maintain its nine-seat bloc in the Parliament. The Prime Minister, in another blunt move, warned voters in what some described as electorate blackmail --that if they elected opposition governments in any of the states, then the central government would cut off all funds to those states.¹⁶⁷ "Vote for a strong government or suffer," he said.¹⁶⁸

The NF's overwhelming victory in the elections did not remove racialism from Malaysia's political life but may, in fact, have exaggerated the problem. In the process of securing power for the Malay-dominated Government for the next five years, this strong victory virtually wiped out all the moderate and nonracial opposition parties.¹⁶⁹ What remained was a militant, racially-oriented Chinese party (DAP) as the only alternative to the Government. Long-time political observers felt that its (DAP) emergence as the only viable opposition could polarize politics racially and exaggerate ethnic differences in this delicately balanced country of Malays, Chinese and Indians.¹⁷⁰

B. THE 1978 GENERAL ELECTIONS

As expected, the 1978 Malaysian General Elections almost resembled an "instant replay" of the last one (1974). It was not so much a landslide as a lava flow, with the overwhelming majority for the ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front) of Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn slowly becoming evident on the morning of Sunday, July 9, but without any of the drama and trauma of great victories or crushing defeats.¹⁷¹ The NF, now a ten-party coalition, captured 94 of the 114 (82.5%) parliamentary seats in Peninsular Malaysia. As usual, Chinese representation failed to materialize in the Cabinet and Senate (Tables XVII-XVIII). Although Chinese representation in the House of Representatives rose one percentage point to the ten percentage point mark, this figure was inconsequential in regards to political power and influence in the Parliament (Table XIX). At the state assembly level, Chinese representation remained dismal as the voting outcome mirrored those of the 1974 State Legislative Assembly Elections (Table XX).

It would have been a superb victory, but for the shadows of racial polarisation that fell across the voters' verdict.¹⁷² Despite the general atmosphere of peace, there was little, if any, doubt that the myth of inter-racial cooperation was critically questioned by the results. The opposition scored gains that appeared to reflect the Chinese community's unhappiness over Government policies.¹⁷³

TABLE XVII

1978 CABINET OF THE FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA

Prime Minister	Hussein Onn
Deputy Prime Minister	Mahathir Bin Mohamad
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ahmad Rithaudeen Alhaj Bin Tengku Ismail
Minister of Defence	Amar Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud
Minister of Home Affairs	Muhammad Ghazali Bin Shafie
Minister of Finance	Razaleigh Hamzah
Minister of Culture, Youth & Sports	Abdul Samad Bin Idris
Minister of Works & Public Utilities	Lee Sang Choon **
Minister of Transport	V. Manickavasagam
Minister of Education	Musa Hitam
Minister of Health	Chong Hon Nyan **
Minister of Trade & Industry	Mahathir Bin Mohamad
Minister of Welfare Services	Aishah binte Abdul Ghani
Minister of Housing & Local Government	Michael Chen Wing Sum **
Minister of Labour	Richard Ho Ung Hun **
Minister of Information	Mohamed Bin Rahmat
Minister of Agriculture	Shariff Ahmad
Minister of Law & Attorney-General	Seri Haji Hamzah Bin Datuk Abu Samah
Minister of Primary Industries	Paul Leong Khee Jeong **
Minister of Federal Territories	Hussein Onn
Minister of Science, Technology & Environment	Ong Kee Hui **
Minister of Land & Regional Development	Abdul Kadir Bin Yusof
Minister of Public Enterprises	Abdul Manan Bin Othman
Minister of Energy, Telecommunications & Posts	Leo Moggie
Minister without Portfolio	Mohamed Bin Nasir

Source: Europa Publications Limited. The Far East and Australasia 1978 (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1978).

Notes: ** Indicates Chinese ministers; all National Front members.

TABLE XVIII

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE SENATE 1978

Name	Party
Ong Yoke Lin (Appointed)	NF
Lim Joo Keng (Appointed)	NF
Gan Teck Yeow (Appointed)	NF
Kam Woon Wah (Appointed)	NF
Law Hieng Ding (Appointed)	NF
Lim Keng Yaik (Appointed)	NF
Seah Teng Ngaib (Appointed)	NF
Wee Khoo Hock (Appointed)	NF
Chan Kwong Hon (Selangor)	NF
Chong Foo Khin (Negeri Sembilan)	NF
Chua Ching Cheng (Malacca)	NF
Lee Loy Seng (Perak)	NF
Lim Ah Sitt (Johore)	NF
Ngau Ken Lock (Pahang)	NF
Oh Siew Aun (Perak)	NF

Percentage of Chinese members in the Senate = 28% (15 out of 54)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate = 32% (7 out of 22)

Percentage of elected Chinese members in the Senate excluding the National Front (NF) Senators = 0% (0 out of 22)

*Remarks in parenthesis indicate the following: the state from which the Senator was elected or that the Senator was appointed.

NF - National Front

TABLE XIX

WEST MALAYSIAN CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1978

Name	State	Party
Au How Cheong	Perak	NF
Chan Kok Kit	Selangor	DAP
Chan Siang Sun	Pahang	NF
Chan Teck Chan	Malacca	DAP
Chen Man Hin	Negeri Sembilan	DAP
Chen Wing Sum (Michael)	Selangor	NF
Chian Heng Kai	Perak	DAP
Chin Hon Ngian	Johore	NF
Chong Hon Yan	Malacca	NF
Chow Poh Kheng	Selangor	NF
Goh Cheng Teik	Penang	NF
Hee Tien Lai	Johore	NF
Ho Ung Hun (Richard)	Perak	NF
Lee Boon Beng	Negeri Sembilan	NF
Lee Kaw	Johore	DAP
Lee Lam Thye	Selangor	DAP
Lee San Choon	Johore	NF
Leong Khoo Seong (Paul)	Perak	NF
Lew Sip Hon	Selangor	NF
Lim Cho Hock	Perak	DAP
Lim Kiam Hoon	Kedah	NF
Lim Kit Siang	Selangor	DAP
Ling Liang Siok	Penang	NF
Mak Hon Kam	Perak	NF
Neo Yee Fan	Johore	NF
Oo Gin Sun	Kedah	NF
Seow Hun Khim	Penang	DAP
Tan Koon Swan	Pahang	NF
Tan Tiong Hong	Selangor	NF
Ting Chek Ming	Perak	DAP
Wong Hoong Keat	Penang	DAP
Yang Choong Fu	Perak	NF

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives =
28% (32 out of 114)

Percentage of Chinese members in the House of Representatives
excluding the National Front (NF) Representatives = 10% (11 out
of 114)

*NF - National Front and DAP - Democratic Action Party

TABLE XX

CHINESE REPRESENTATION IN THE STATE ASSEMBLIES
OF WEST MALAYSIA IN 1978

State Assembly	*Percentage of Chinese Population	Number of Members	Number of Chinese Members	Percentage of Chinese Members	Number of non-Chinese Members	Percentage of non- Chinese Members
Johore	39	32	11	34	1	3
Kedah	19	26	4	15	0	0
Kelantan	5	36	1**	3**	0**	0**
Malacca	40	20	6	30	3	15
Negeri Sembilan	38	24	7	29	2	8
Pahang	31	32	7	22	0	0
Penang	56	27	14	52	4	15
Perak	42	42	15	36	7	17
Perlis	16	12	2	17	0	0
Selangor	46	33	9	27	3	9
Trengganu	5	28	1	4	0	0

SOURCE: New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 10 July 1978.

NOTES: *Figures based on 1970 West Malaysian census.

**Kelantan did not hold elections to their State Assembly. Figures reflect the results of the 1974 elections.

NF = National Front

The MCA who traditionally derive support from the Chinese business community and funds from the powerful towkays (Chinese entrepreneurs), dropped three seats in the Parliament from its pre-election position. Its setback showed Chinese disenchantment with the party over its ability to bargain effectively with the dominantly Malay Government.¹⁷⁴ The Chinese . . . were also unhappy over the Government's long-term policy of transferring wealth, jobs and educational opportunity out of their hands to the ethnic Malays.¹⁷⁵ Mid-level businessmen who traditionally support the MCA expressed concern that, as a political tool of the National Front, its representative position is compromised.¹⁷⁶ While the Front amassed only 55.14% of the total votes cast, the DAP picked up 20.78%--more than the MCA.¹⁷⁷ The Government reported a turnout of more than 3.5 million, or over 70 percent of the eligible voters.¹⁷⁸

C. PAST TRENDS

During the past thirteen years, the pattern of Chinese representation in the political hierarchy of Malaysia (federal and state levels) has been firmly established. In the Cabinet and Senate, Chinese representation has been predictably nonexistent (Figures 15-16). Chinese political power in the House of Representatives has been characterized by the extremely miniscule percentage of elected representatives (Figure 17). This trend also extended down to the state assemblies where the only instance of equitable Chinese representation (58% representation in comparison with

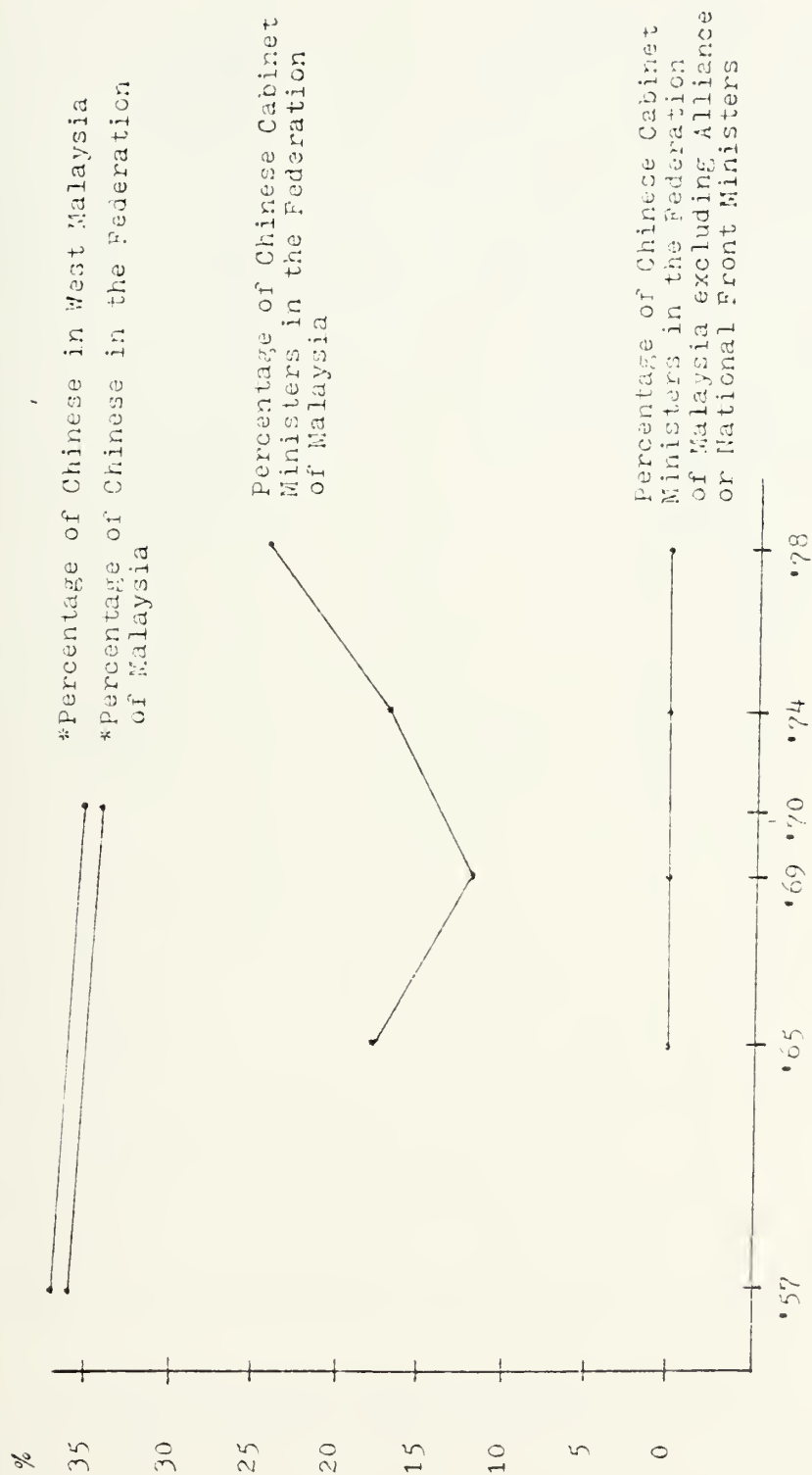


Figure 15. Chinese Representation in the Cabinet, 1965 - 1978

NOTE: *Percentages are based on 1957 and 1970 Malaysian Population Census.

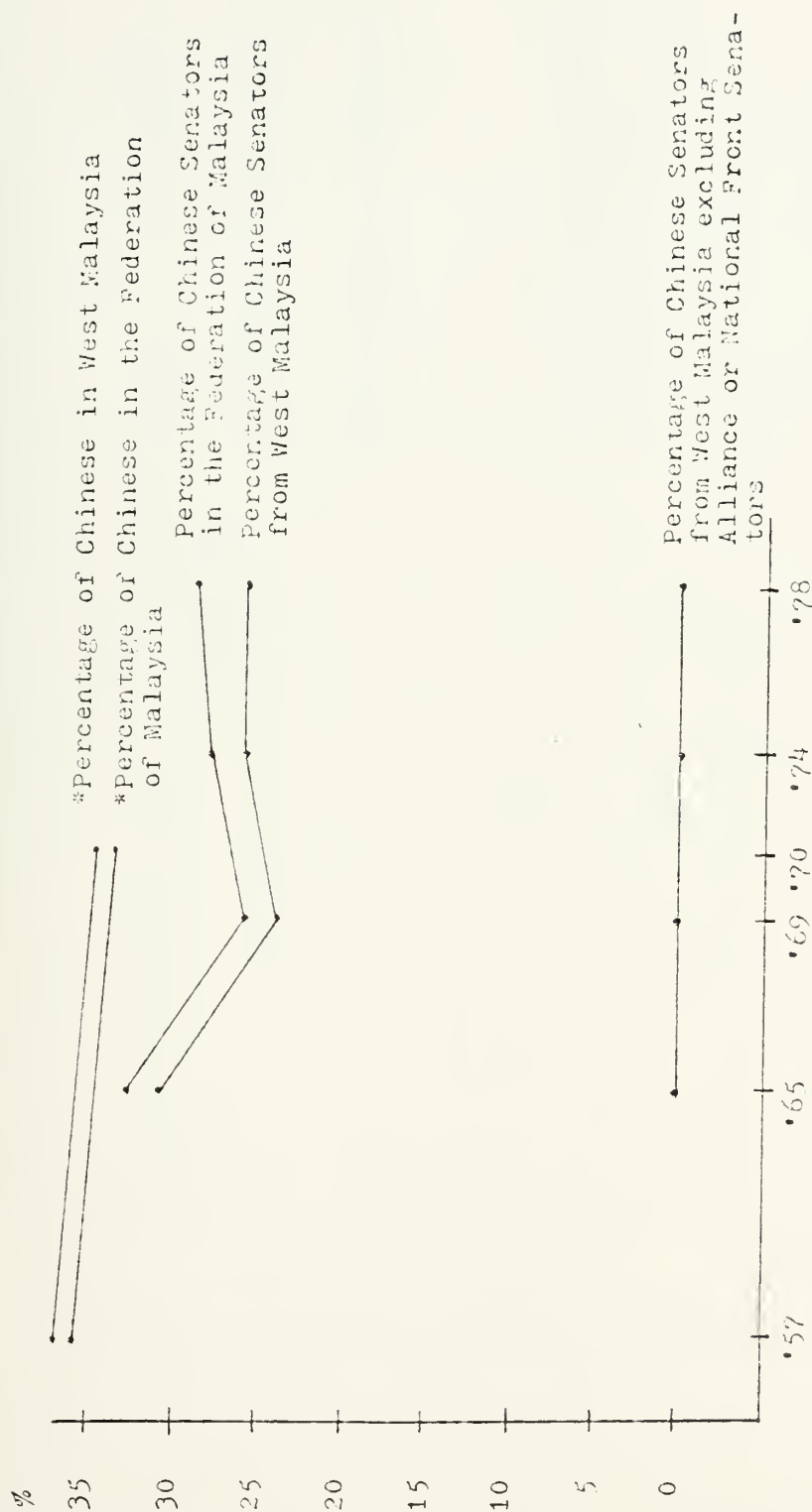


Figure 16. Chinese Representation in the Senate, 1965 - 1978

NOTE: *Percentages are based on 1957 and 1970 Malaysian Population Census.

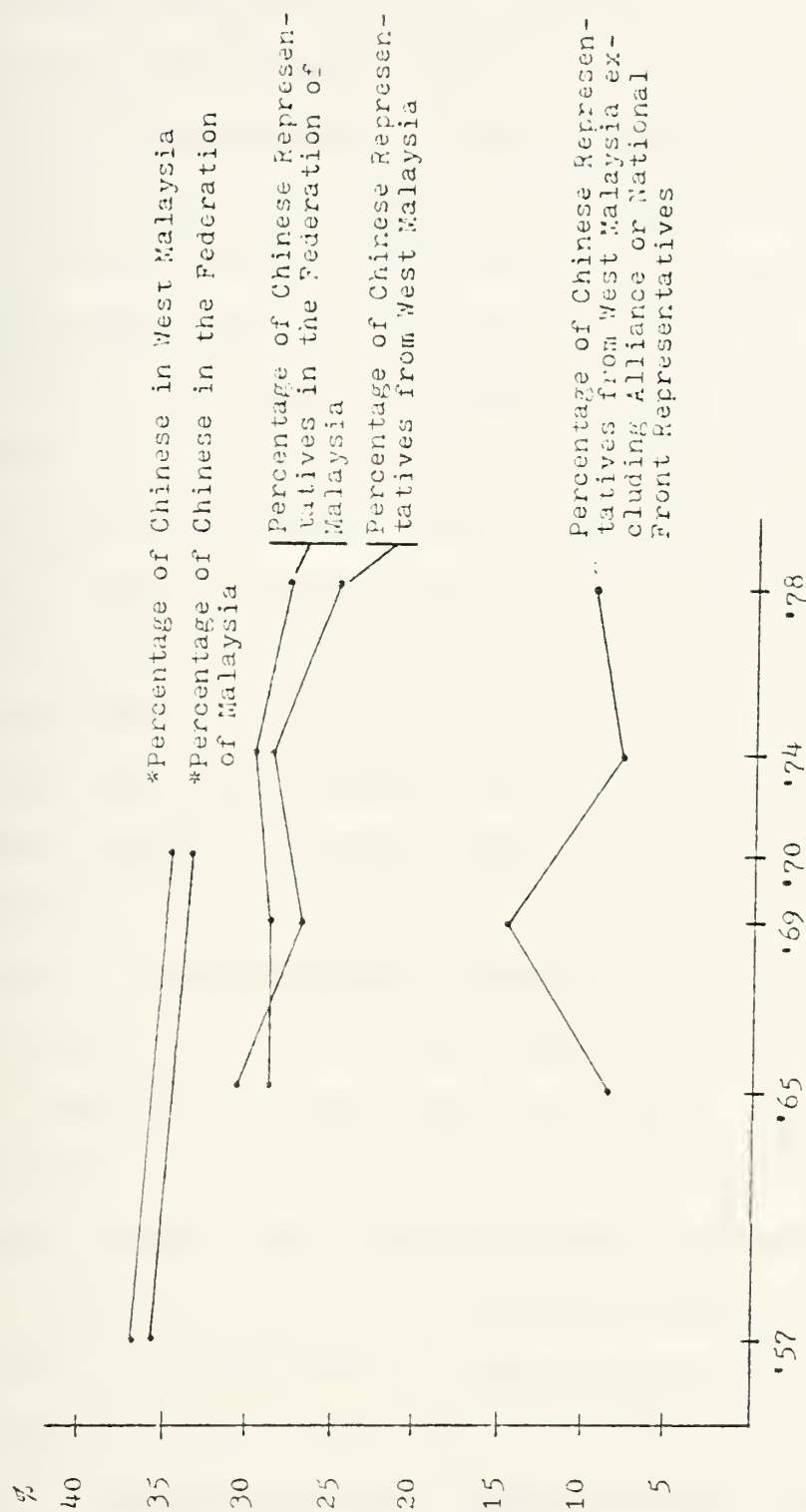


Figure 17. Chinese Representation in the House of Representatives, 1965 - 1978

NOTE: *Percentages are based on 1957 and 1970 Malaysian Population Census.

a 56% Chinese population ratio) occurred in the 1969 Penang State Legislative Assembly General Election (Figures 18-28).

The continued presence of the National Front and the UMNO, in particular, at the apex of the political ladder in Malaysia leaves one with the impression of complete solidarity in the Malay camp. But beneath the surface, intra-community issues have caused a diversification of views among the Malays. One of the major intra-community issues centers on the dispute among Malay state leaders for federally-funded programs of road and bridge building, and port and airport construction which enhance the economic well-being of their individual state. This competition extends to the national level where each state strongly vies for a larger piece of the federal budget. A second issue focuses on the essence of the National Front. Although the National Front has accomplished its conceptualized objective of reducing the political opposition by co-opting formerly antagonistic parties, disparity of views among the Malays has been wide and continues to grow. A third major issue involves the differences between the older and younger generations of Malays. These differences in opinion on almost every significant issue have resulted in a movement of the younger generation away from the center position which the "Old Guard" maintains. Although the Malay "generation gap" has become increasingly serious in recent times, other ethnic groups in Malaysia (especially the Chinese) have not been immune to this problem. The younger generation of Chinese has also

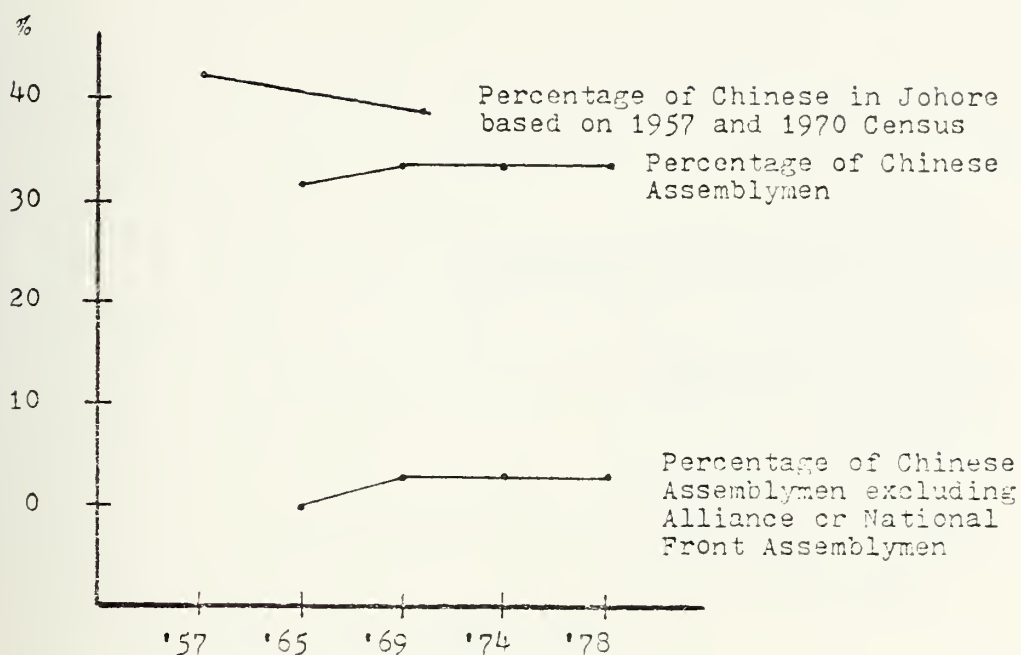


Figure 18. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Johore, 1965-1978

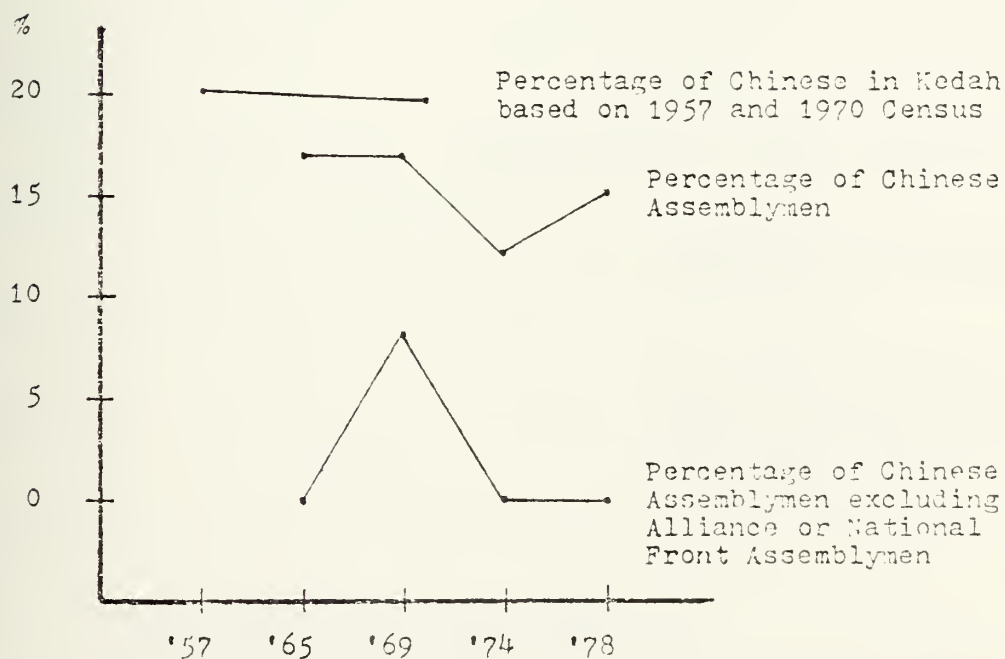


Figure 19. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Kedah, 1965-1978

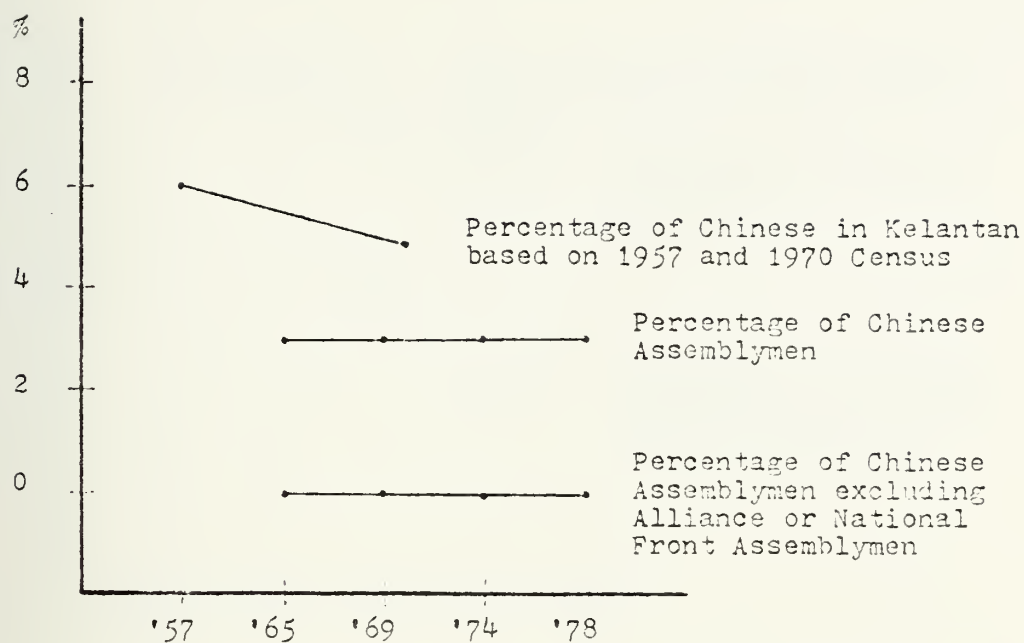


Figure 20. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Kelantan, 1965-1978

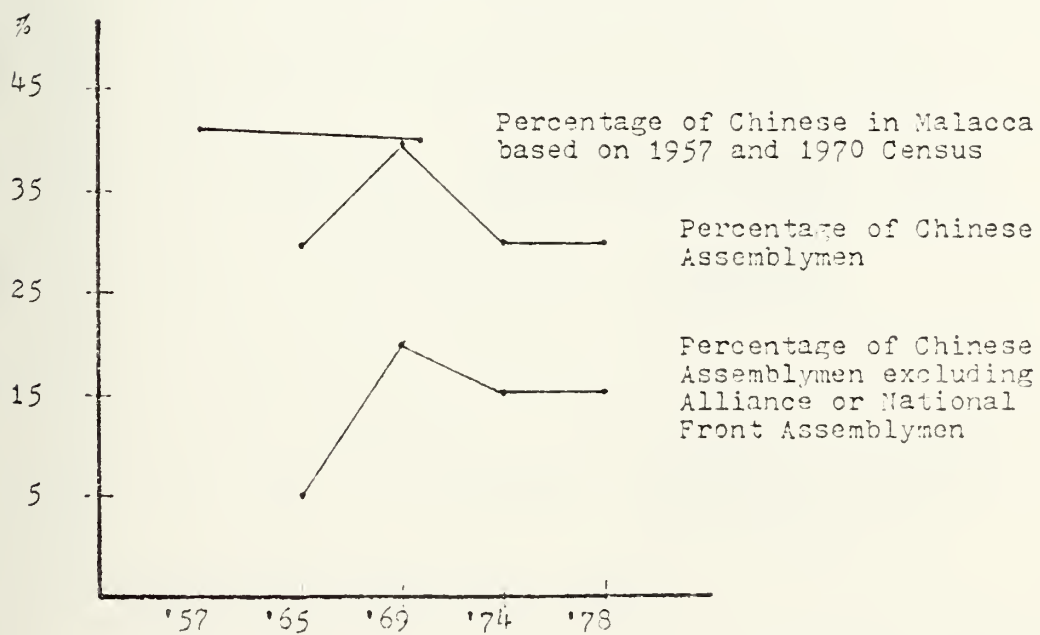


Figure 21. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Malacca, 1965-1978

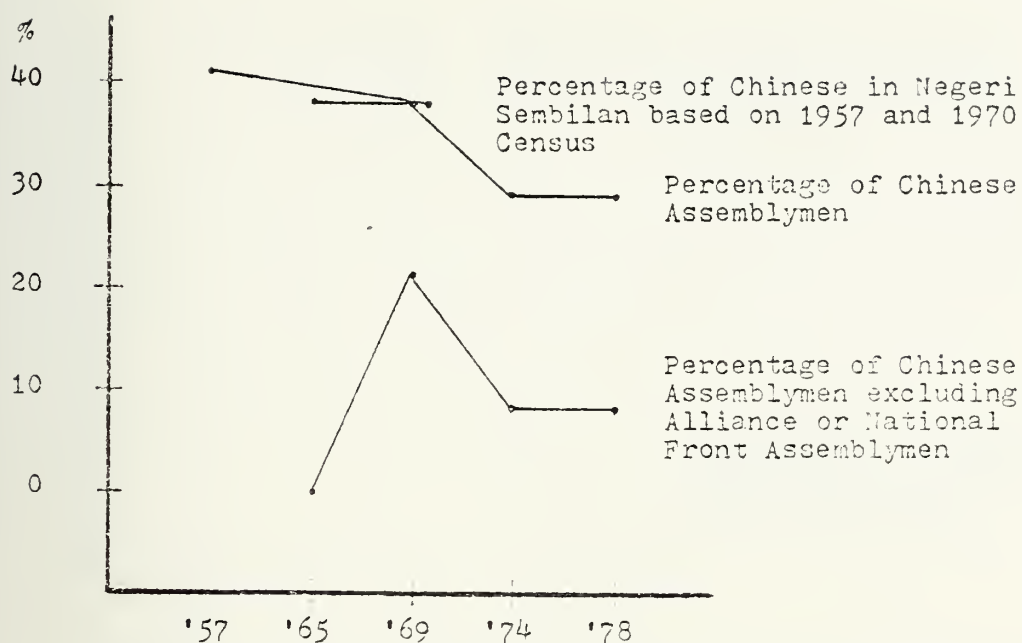


Figure 22. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Negeri Sembilan, 1965-1978

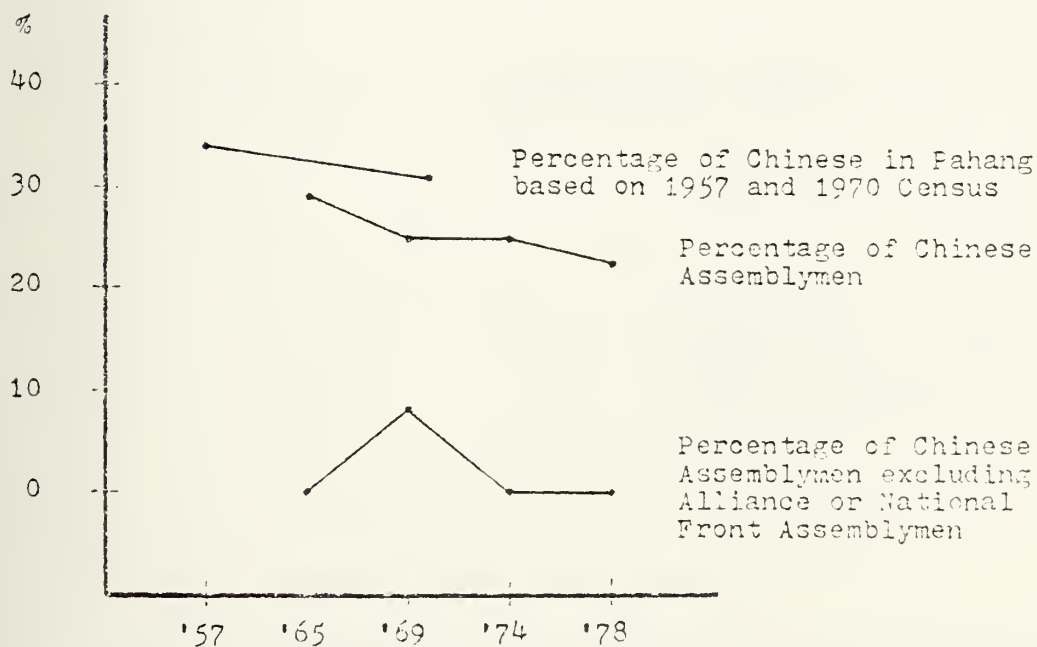


Figure 23. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Pahang, 1965-1978

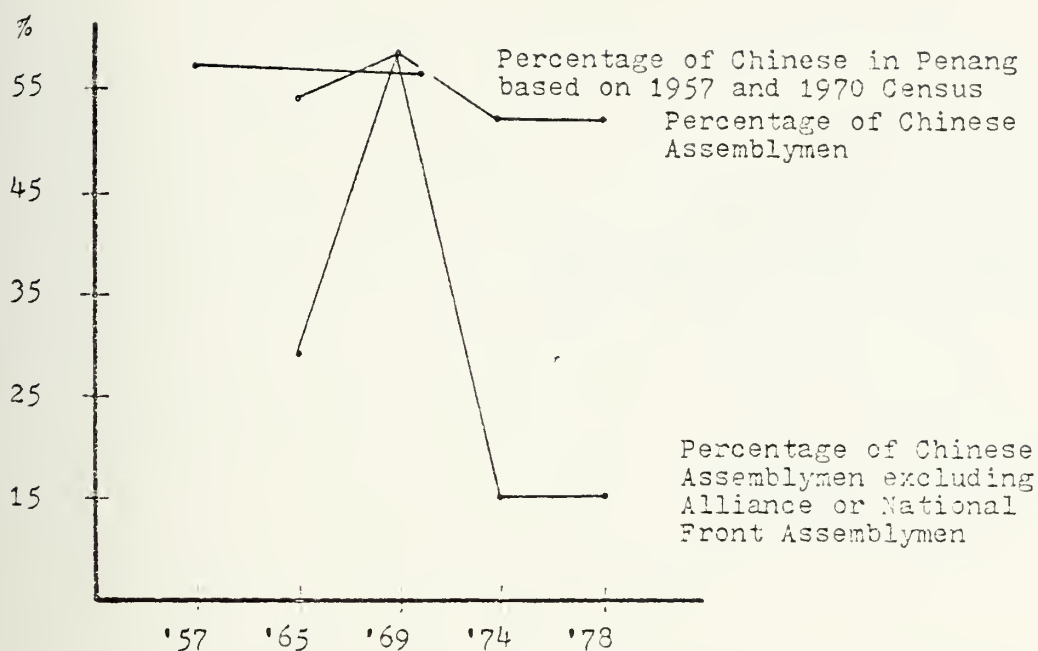


Figure 24. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Penang, 1965-1978

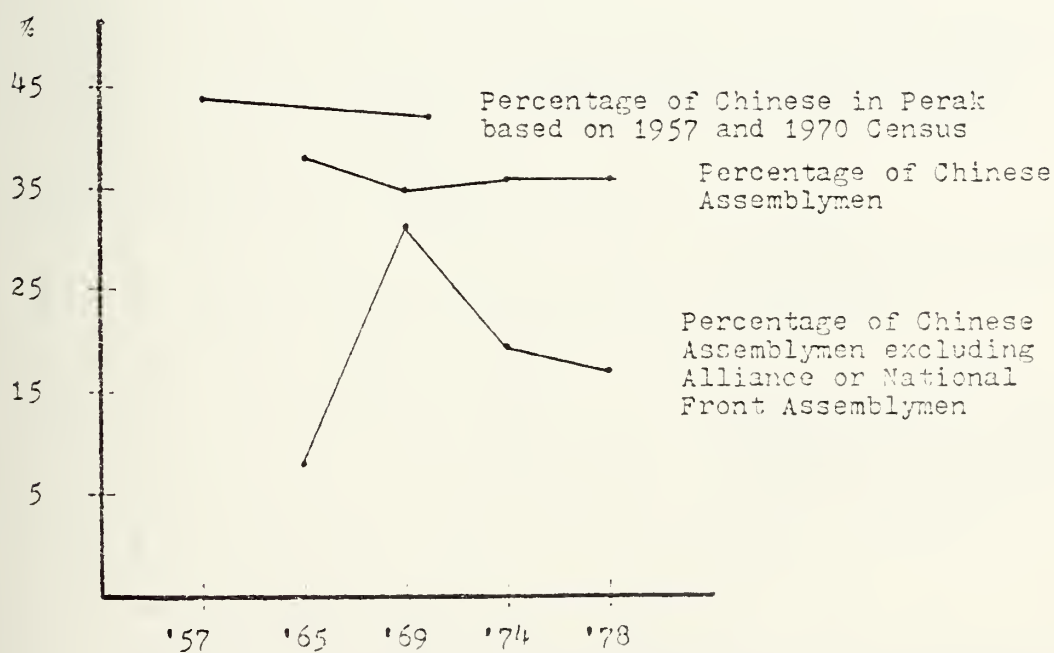


Figure 25. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Perak, 1965-1978

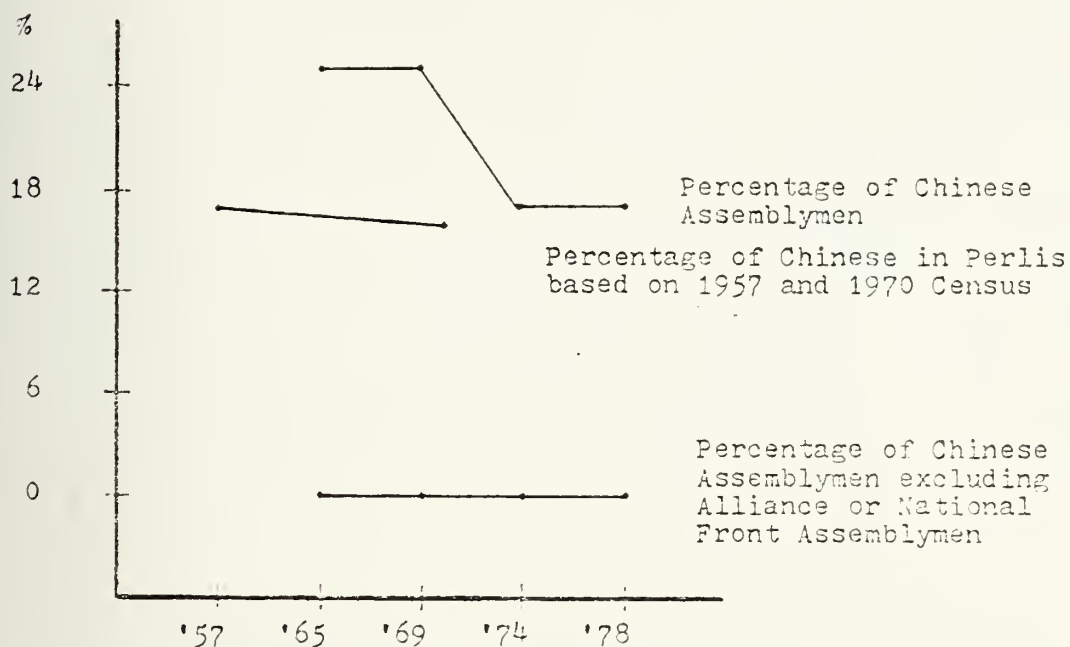


Figure 26. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Perlis, 1965-1978

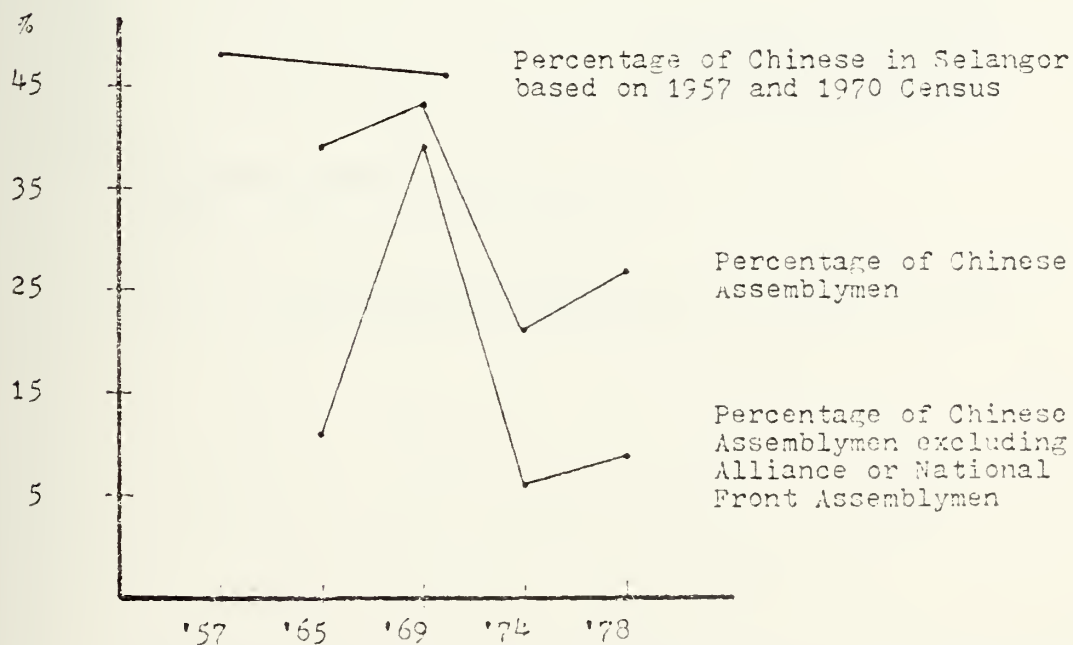


Figure 27. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Selangor, 1965-1978

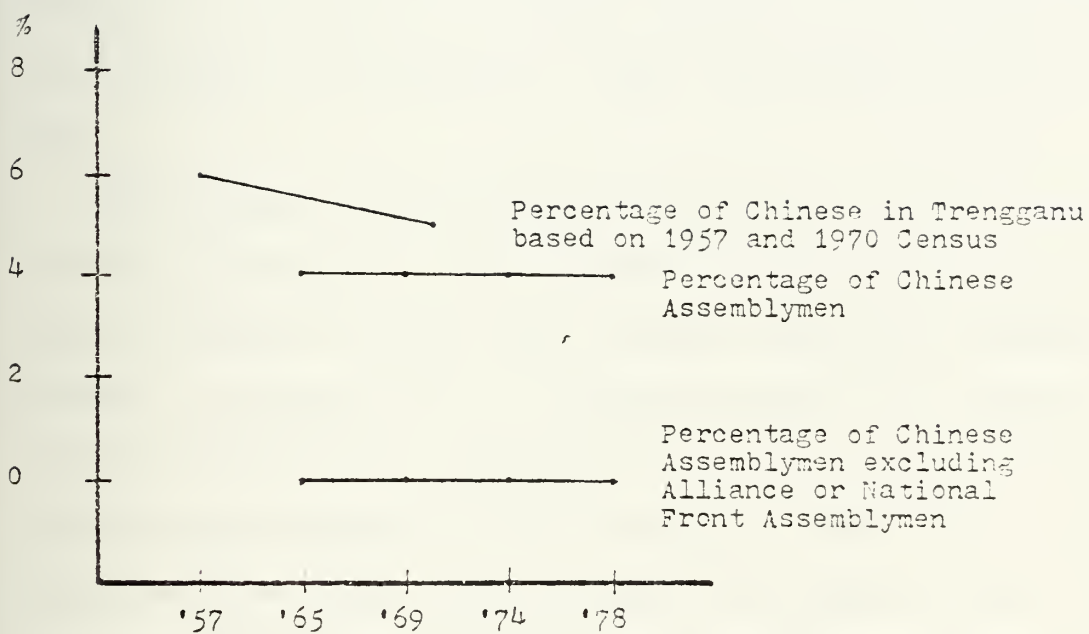


Figure 28. Chinese Representation in the State Assembly of Trengganu, 1965-1978

effected a disattachment from the traditionally compromising stances of the elders but their move has been in the opposite direction from their Malay counterparts. Although this problem has gained added significance in recent years, the real intra-community rivalry among the Chinese concentrates on the following question: Who represents the Chinese community? Over the years, it has become quite apparent that the MCA no longer possessed the "Mandate of Heaven" within the Chinese community. Although several Chinese factions have claimed the mandate, no clear successor has rose to the top.

While these intra-community issues are real and significant in portraying a clear picture of the Malaysian political scene, they are not the only problems which stir beneath a surface of apparent calm. Disputes between the federal and state governments are commonplace in the countries of Southeast Asia and Malaysia is no exception. The issues in Malaysia revolve around the economic development of the states, distribution of wealth to the rural areas of the various states, and actual power between the governments. Over the years, the federal government has been very slow to fund or support economic projects beneficial to the states such as dam and bridge construction and general infrastructure development. Gordon P. Means summarizes the distribution of wealth problem in the following manner:

It appears likely that they (Malay special rights and the NEP) will produce both increased social differentiation and increased economic disparities within the Malay community. Malays who are most likely to take full advantage

of special rights are those who are already urbanized, who already have a fairly good income and already have the educational background and motivation to exploit the opportunities created by the NEP. The peasant Malay in isolated rural communities may get improved social services and some marginal and indirect benefits from special rights, but it appears unlikely that his economic condition will change as rapidly as his expectations and aspirations rise, partly because the government's highly publicized promises to eradicate Malay poverty are generating a sharp rise in Malay expectations. As a new class of Malays emerges with wealth, status and education, the social cleavages within Malay society will likely become more pronounced and the Malay peasantry may well acquire a more intense sense of relative deprivation and animosity toward those who acquire, at a far faster pace, the more visible economic benefits of modernization.¹⁷⁹

In early 1978, the chief minister of Selangor, Datuk Harun Idris, challenged the power of the federal government. Convicted for corruption (misuse of government funds), forgery and criminal breach of trust and rebuffed by the Privy Council in London, Datuk Harun Idris. . . decided, in his own words, that he was "innocent from the point of law and morality."¹⁸⁰ His defiance of the federal government led to his declaration of imprisonment in his own house of supporters who refused to allow him to be incarcerated. As the probability of intra-community (Malay) violence became increasingly imminent, Harun gave himself up. Although disaster was averted in this case, the resolution of conflict between federal and state governments do not appear to be even on the distant horizon.

VI. CONCLUSION

C. P. Fitzgerald wrote the following passage concerning the future of the Federation of Malaysia in his book, The Third China, which was published in 1965:

The future prospects would seem dark with clouds of misunderstanding, divergent purposes and communal ill-will. Yet it must be remembered that one of the great gifts of the Chinese is that of devising compromises. It is inherent in a nation of bargainers, and particularly well developed in communities of merchants and businessmen. These qualities will be needed if a solution to the difficulties of the Chinese in Malaysia is to be found, and they will be put to a severe test.¹⁸¹

On the political scene, it appears that not only the Chinese but also the Malays are flunking this test.

Both ethnic communities fully realize the problem confronting them. Communalism has been, and still remains, the curse of Malayan politics.¹⁸² Just as both parties acknowledge the roots of the problem, they also realize the solution to their dilemma. However, the recognition "did not abolish ethnocentrism but merely modernized it."¹⁸³ Not long after May 1969, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, a high UMNO official, stated:

The politics of this country has been, and must remain for the foreseeable future, native-based; that was the secret of our stability and our prosperity and that is a fact of political life which no one can simply wish away. . . a native base which believes not in false promises or in compulsion but in cooperation with all other races in the country.¹⁸⁴

The key word is "cooperation" for a common good and, in this case, it is a national unity which has eluded Malaya since

independence. Directly connected to cooperation and the attainment of national unity is sacrifice by both the Malays and Chinese especially in politics and economics, respectively. Gerald P. Dartford stated:

. . . the belief that. . . Malays can dominate. . . Chinese. . . forever and assimilate them culturally is an impossible dream. Any attempt to realize it could lead to racial strife as bitter as that between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.¹⁸⁵

Will the non-Malay (Chinese) be given equal access to the political system as Malays acquire a greater share of benefits from the economic system? Despite the efforts of a few Malays and Chinese who were willing to cooperate and sacrifice for the betterment of Malaysia, "reduced Chinese influence in the commercial sector has not been offset by an improved political stature."¹⁸⁶ Prime Minister Hussein Onn's attempt to appease the Chinese by revising the NEP (New Economic Policy) ran into opposition not only from the UMNO politicians but also civil servants.¹⁸⁷ Lee San Choon, MCA President, put it this way:

If there are traditions and values which are more of a burden to us than an asset. . . let us not be afraid to change. Unless we do so, we continue to labour under a conflict of values within the community itself and conflicts of views with other communities.¹⁸⁸

Unfortunately, the majority of Malays and Chinese apparently do not share this willingness or desire to make the necessary sacrifices. Even Dr. Tan Chee Khoo, a realistic opposition Chinese leader, acknowledged that for the next thirty or forty years the Malays would not accept a government where the non-Malays had a dominant role.¹⁸⁹ Mahathir Bin

Muhammed projects the Malay feelings perfectly in his book, The Malay Dilemma, as he expounds the belief that "political equality should come only after the achievement of economic and educational equality."¹⁹⁰ This belief in "making the other guy sacrifice first" is extremely dangerous, especially in the Malaysian environment.

Adding fuel to an already difficult and sensitive political situation is a perceived undercurrent of extremism in the younger generation of both ethnic communities. Instead of drawing closer towards a middle-of-the-road position, one senses from their statements and actions that they appear to be headed for the extreme opposite ends of the political spectrum. Issues such as the Merdeka Compact, "an agreement between Malay and Chinese political leaders under which many categories of Chinese would become citizens automatically or on application, in exchange for assistance to the Malays in developing their business schools,"¹⁹¹ draw out the feelings of both ethnic communities, especially the young. Some Malays complained that the Chinese did not keep their side of the bargain, whereas younger Chinese tend to feel their fathers promised too much.¹⁹² More recently, the emotional issue of the proposed Chinese-language Merdeka University became prominent and deepened the rifts between communities. United Malays National Organization (UMNO) branches, particularly its youth wing (Pemuda UMNO), made strident public calls urging the government not to entertain the application.¹⁹³ The younger generation of Chinese apparently feel that they have been pawns and scapegoats for too long.

Only a more equitable distribution of Chinese representation in government would do something to effect a change of attitudes, but it may well be that more than this will be needed before the allegiance of the younger generation of Chinese is won.¹⁹⁴ If these changes do not materialize, the sense of grievance and political alienation by the Chinese will continue and intensify, ultimately veering more and more towards open conflict or support of the Communist movement or both. Then, the Time Bombs in Malaysia, the title of Lim Kit Siang's book, will have exploded into reality.

FOOTNOTES

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